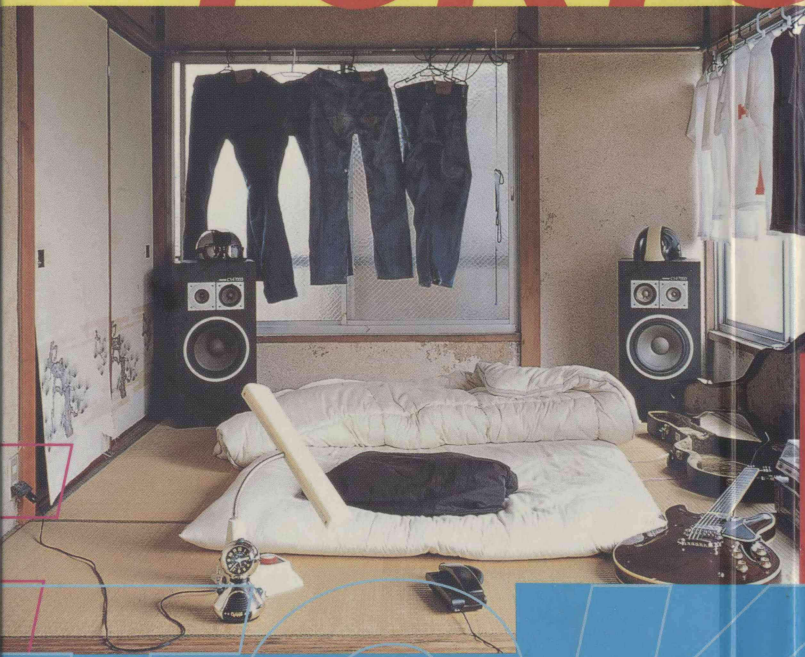
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TOKYO:
a certain style



Here is the real Tokyo, where life is fast, rents are high, and space is tight. *Tokyo: A Certain Style* documents the myriad ways that urban dwellers respond to the space crunch. Four hundred color photos take you inside the habitations of artists, students, young professionals, and families. Here is a dizzying, one-of-a-kind portrait of modern Japanese life—and the perfect coffee table book for people with *really* small apartments.

TOKYO: a certain style

Tsuzuki

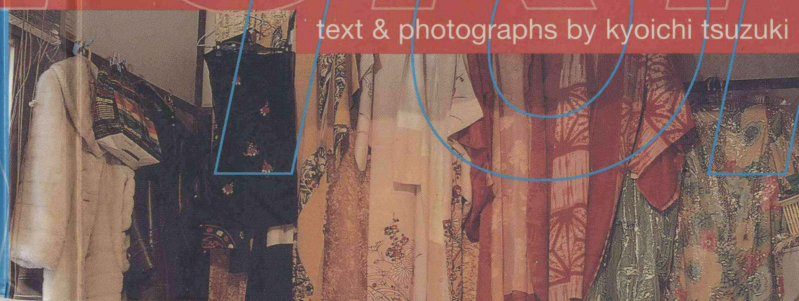
CHRONICLE BOOKS





TOKYO:
a certain style

text & photographs by kyoichi tsuzuki



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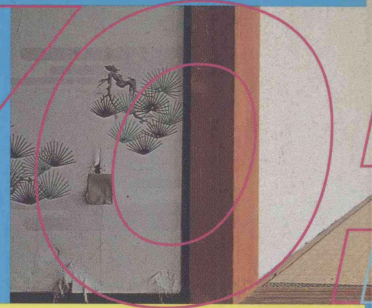
Think *your* living quarters are cramped?

One look at the tiny, cluttered apartments in *Tokyo: A Certain Style* will make you think again. Writer-photographer Kyoichi Tsuzuki visited a hundred apartments, condos, and houses, documenting what he saw in more than 400 color photos that show the real Tokyo style—a far cry from the serene gardens, shoji screens, and Zen minimalism usually associated with Japanese dwellings.

In *this* Tokyo, necessities such as beds, bathrooms, and kitchens vie for space with electronic gadgets, musical instruments, clothes, books, records, and kitschy collectibles. Candid photos vividly capture the dizzying "cockpit effect" of living in a snug space crammed floor to ceiling with stuff. And it's not just bohemian types and students who must fit their lives and work into tight quarters, but professionals and families with children, too. In descriptive captions, the inhabitants discuss the ingenious ways they've adapted their home environments to suit their diverse lifestyles.

Proof that you can still live large in a small apartment, *Tokyo: A Certain Style* will be a source of inspiration to urban dwellers everywhere.

Kyoichi Tsuzuki is editorial director of ArT Random, a series of 102 "slim volumes" on contemporary art. He has written extensively in Japanese publications about art, architecture, and travel, and has also produced books on these subjects. He was born, raised, and educated in Tokyo, where he still lives and works.



Cover design by Shawn Hazen

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TOKYO: a certain style

text & photographs by kyoichi tsuzuki



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ゴミ等捨てる
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寿司よし
寿司よし
てまり
BAR



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Word has it that Tokyo is the hardest city in the world to live in. $10 cups of coffee, $100 per head dinners, $100,000 per square meter land prices. . . . But for us Japanese, the stories you hear have no more reality than the notion of coming home from work to find the wife in a kimono bowing at the entry way with the subtle pine-wood whistling of a tea ceremony kettle in the background. This vision is already little more than a scene from some classic Japanese movie, or some Japanophile's dream. Neither has anything to do with the way most of us actually live here.

Let me tell you: our lifestyles are a lot more ordinary. We live in cozy wood-frame apartments or mini-condos crammed to the gills with things. Formica-topped kotatsu heater-tables plunked down on throw rugs. Western furniture sitting right on top of the tatami mats. It's what we find comfortable. Cramped quarters? You could say that. To a European or American, a good many of the rooms must look like something out of the slums. But you should see some of the stuff we keep in those dumps. Real expensive luxury items.

For the Western sensibility that says if you're rich you'd want to move away from everyone else and build a nice big house, somewhere you can live "in style," the idea that we would choose to live in these "rabbit hutches" like we do probably seems kind of strange. Maybe even comical. But let me tell you: this lifestyle ain't half bad. Sure, for the same amount of money, we could rent much larger

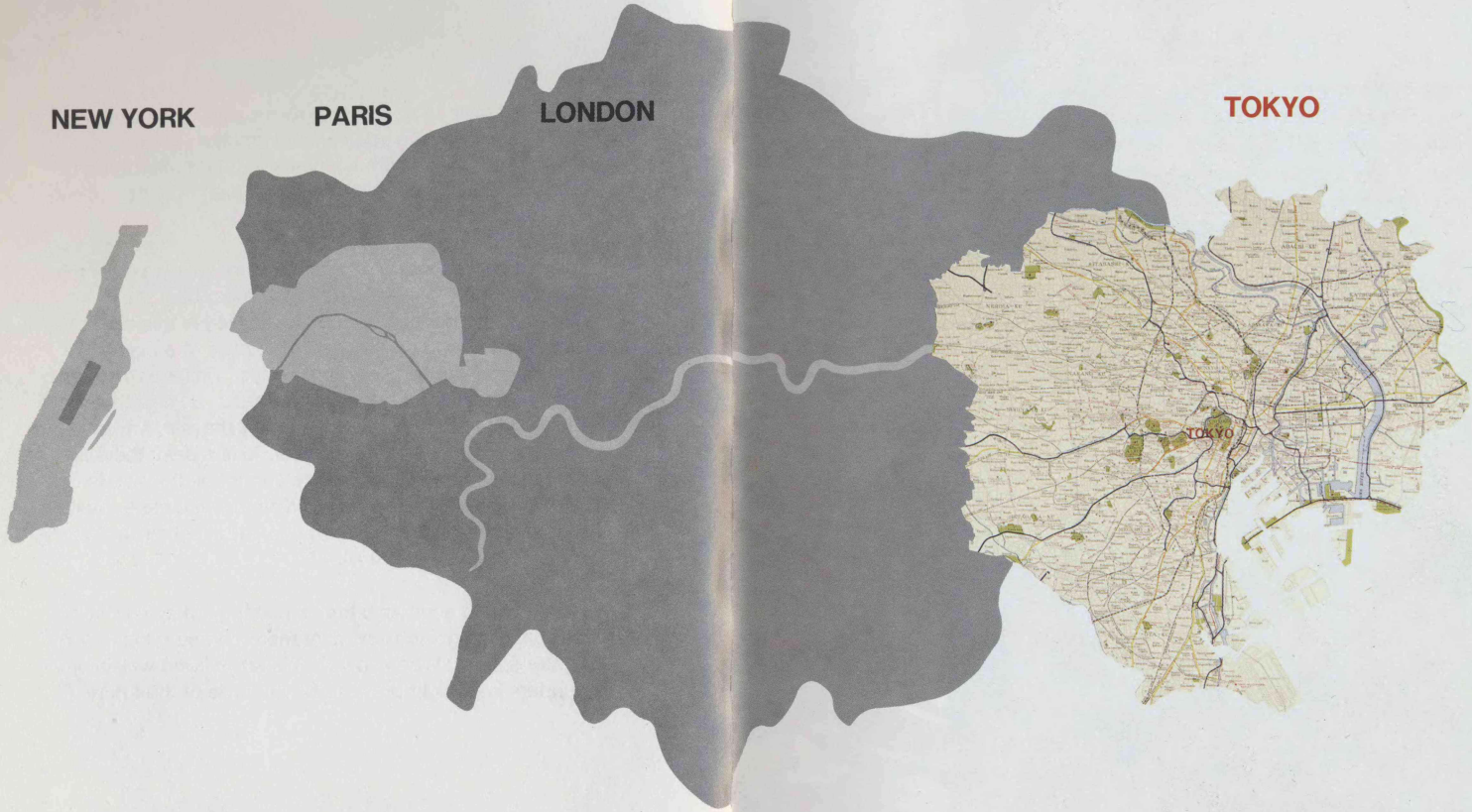
places way out in the burbs. And yet we consciously opt for living in tiny cubbyholes right in the heart of the city. Well, first of all, Tokyo is a safe city. Safe enough for a girl to throw a coat over her pajamas and head out to the corner convenience store in the middle of the night. Safe enough for a drunk to fall asleep by the side of the road with his wallet sticking out of his pocket. Almost never will any harm come to either of them. So if that's the case, why not get yourself a one-room pad close by your favorite bookstores and boutiques and restaurants and watering holes? You can use your neighborhood as your extended living room. At least in this city, there are plenty of happy folks who think that's really the life! Bookstore shelves are lined with more publications on Japanese space than you'd ever want to see. Glossy coffee-table books on the heights of the Japanese aesthetic tradition, whole series of large-format monographs on neo-Zen contemporary architecture, interior decor magazines with full-color coverage of minimal-chic rooms that stylists have fussed over. But how many of these places look lived-in? That's because what these books show are the co-creations of known architects and photographers, or else very skillful presentations of designer products. It's because no one can live like those pictures that make them attractive showpieces.

Just how many of us do you think actually live in the kind of interiors featured in those luxurious photo-documentations? On the other hand, I know lots of people who manage to live in cluttered, closet-sized walk-ups with great

ease and style. And yes, I do mean style. By definition, a "style" is something you can see catching on among different people; whereas if you can't find one person around you living the other way, it can hardly be considered a "style."

Let's put an end to this media trickery, giving poor ignorant foreigners only images of the most beautiful Japanese apartments to drool over. Hence this book; I wanted to show you the real Tokyo style, the places we honest-and-truly do spend our days. Call it pathetically overcrowded, call it hopelessly chaotic . . . hey, that's the reality. And, I might add, a reality that's not nearly so unpleasant as you might imagine. Take a seat: there are tangerines and your TV remote control on the kotatsu, piles of books beside your cushion, a wastepaper basket a mere arm's toss away. Now you get a feel for the "cockpit effect" we love so well.

Sure, if world economic trends continue to spiral downward, there's going to be a lot more people living in a lot tighter spaces. Who knows? This art of living well in small quarters just might prove to be the style of the future.



1:200000

Tokyo and Yokohama English Map published by Nicchi Shuppan Co., Ltd.

美は乱調にあり

Beauty in Chaos

Around the beginning of the century, Japanese anarchist thinker Sakae Osugi proclaimed his vision of the essence of Japanese aesthetics, that "beauty is to be found in disarray." Indeed, no matter how confused a home—or homeland—might appear to others, the residents themselves will invariably see a resolute order underscoring all their living conditions. The place isn't dirty; it's just the organic randomness that gives it such ineffable charm. No sooner have you set foot inside than you're pulling books out of the piles to read their titles or you're dusting off some curio on the shelf, it's all so comfortably chaotic. Though lest we forget, one of the original meanings of the Greek word kaos was "abyss!"



Two Kyoto-born artist brothers—thirty-two and thirty-three respectively—have been living in this wooden two-room apartment for more than eight years, ever since art school. Though old and unsoundproofed, $600 per month for two rooms, a kitchen, a separate toilet and bath is quite reasonable by Tokyo standards. Overflowing with CDs and books, the place keeps them happy because they both have their own small studio spaces. The only problem is that they have to use headphones to listen to music late at night and cannot use amplifiers when they practice playing their electric guitars.

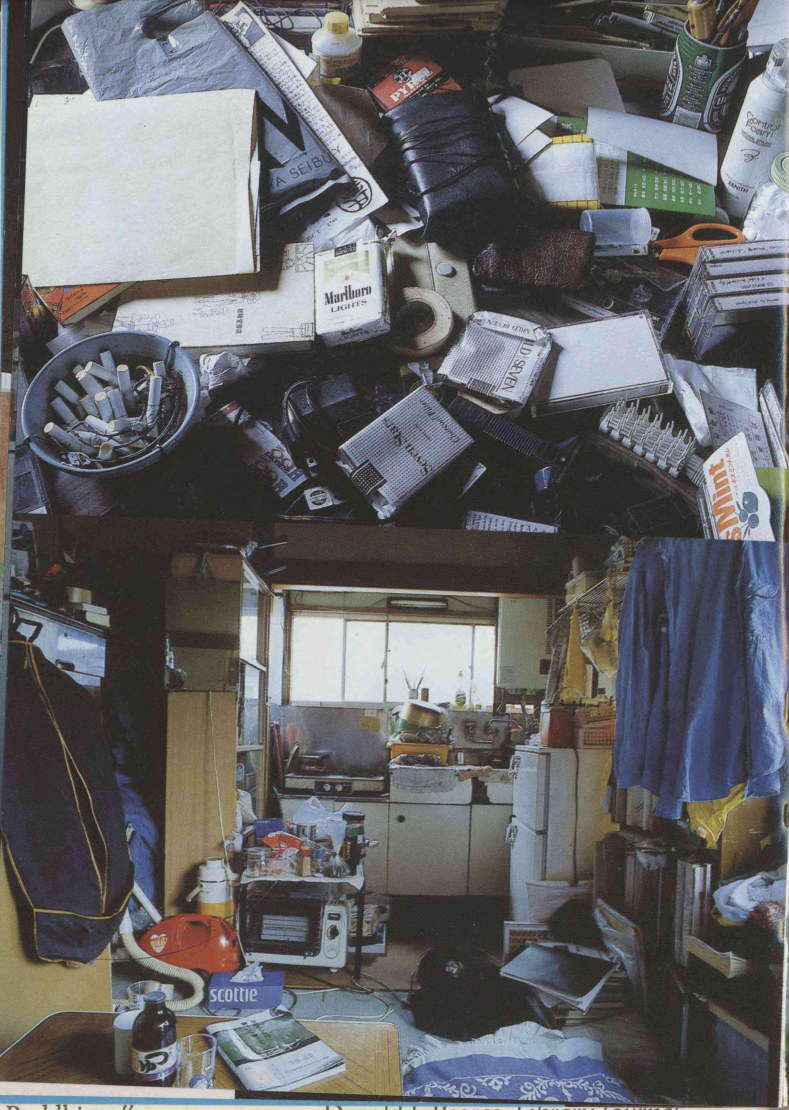
There's no wall space on which to hang tableaux.



The ubiquitous clothesline works as an alternative to the traditional closet.



The younger brother's windowside "nest." There's plenty of sunlight, so laundry dries fast. The bookshelves are filled with contemporary art books.



A random-access tabletop eliminates delving through drawers. Between the brothers, there is an affluence of shoes and wastebaskets. So save for midwinter and midnight, the entryway door is left wide open—or rather, it just can't be shut.

Everything You Always Never Wanted to Know about Dorm Life

A perfect example of an art school dormitory. Each floor has two large suites, each comprising a main kitchen and dining room with four to five small bedrooms adjoining. This school is the most difficult art academy to enter in Japan. You'd hardly know it, however, from the lifestyle here. Nor is it necessarily always true that men's quarters are dirtier than the women's—at least not here.



The kitchen of one suite, looked after by four or five male students. The punching bag was left behind by an upperclassman. From which we are to imagine heated aesthetic discussions nightly?


Hair Clipper
Saran Wrap
サランラップ

Each bedroom is approximately six square yards in size, with a built-in bed under the window. The fun comes in seeing how each student has created a completely different room from the very same space.

Above, a female student's room, painted solid black, with a black-light fluorescent ceiling lamp.

Occasionally there's the archetypal art student's room. The unique wall texture is applied plaster. Not a thought for the next occupant.

"Rap" It Up

A young illustrator lives in this small one-room apartment. A music and "popular mechanics" enthusiast, he generally stays in his room making back-up tracks for rap music or tapping car-telephone conversations. Once he decided to spraypaint everything silver, starting with the bathroom, then the air conditioner, then . . . He had to stop midway, because the air conditioner filled the whole room with paint fumes. He never cleans his room, so his girlfriend comes by once a week and tries to tidy it up as much as possible, without much visible success.



A general view of the work-room/living space. The scroll on the wall dates from his high school calligraphy club days. A dedicated night person, he rarely opens his curtains.

Abandoned efforts at hand-painting arabesques on the sliding door. Right, a supermarket cart "borrowed" and used as a laundry basket, just waiting for his girlfriend.





On this side of the desk, the television and video player.



Hobbies—The Light Side, The Dark Side

Home to a working couple in their thirties. The husband divides his time between his patent-office job and his diverse hobbies. He collects everything from audio equipment to musical instruments, from computer gear to pipe tobacco, all of which leaves literally no place to walk. With no room for visitors, this photo session was their first time to receive guests in almost a year.

The ground floor room has turned into the husband's playroom. His interests are too broad for the space they have to share. Things get pushed back out of reach as he tires of them, as can be seen from the inaccessible Macintosh.



A typical house in a typical residential area. Our couple occupies the closer half of lower and upper floors.



A steep climb upstairs. The steps are worn slick, and moreover piled with stuff along either side, making this a fairly difficult passage.

The ground floor room, plus kitchen and entryway.









They're especially fond of their old-fashioned tiled bath.



A true Japanese-style toilet with wooden tank—a rarity nowadays. There is something Zen here, it's so serene.

Bunker on the Front Lines of Music

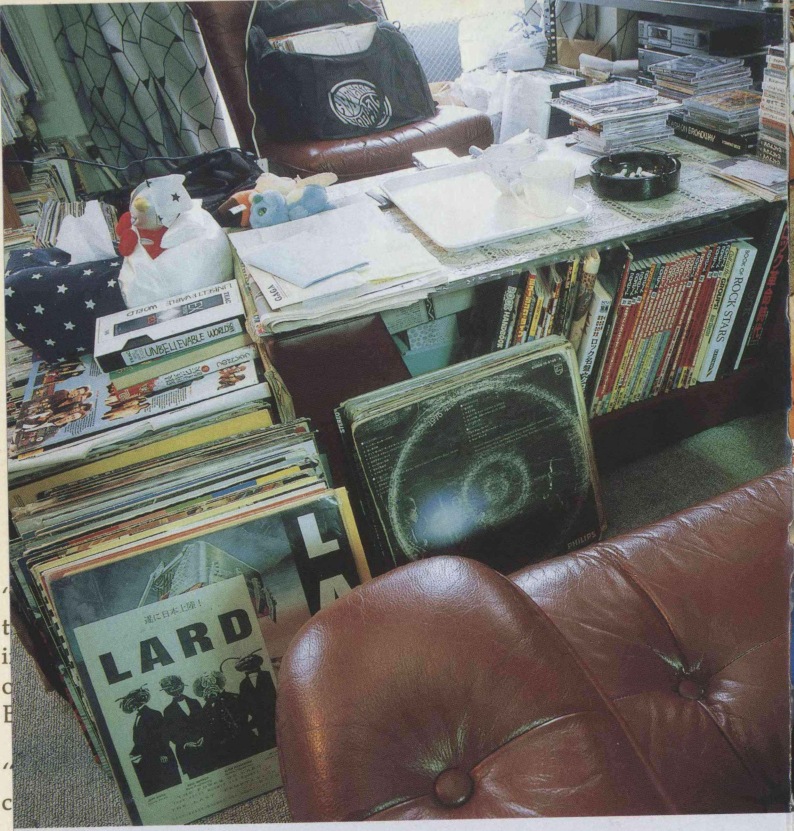
A rock critic and DJ calls this his home, study, stockroom, and taping studio. About the only furnishings to speak of are a sofa set and steel bureau. Good thing he lives close to his parents, who let him come over regularly for a decent meal and a bath (the boiler in his own apartment is unreliable).



The CDs here–rock only!–are filed by "styles" and "influences." As he often does gigs at clubs, a simple home-DJ system is a must.



Coming home at dawn after a long night's work and rising in the evenings, he never bothers to fold up his futon.





The convenient at-your-fingertips bedside. He always pops into a 24-hour convenience store on the way home.



Macro-mess Director ver. 4.01

An American freelancing in computer-related fields occupies what ought to have been—were it not for the way he's scattered things everywhere—a roomy interior, with a sunny terrace attached. Instead of putting things away, he argues, keeping everything out in plain view tells you what's where at a glance. Naturally, his girlfriend doesn't buy a word of it.

A theoretically spacious eight-tatami-mat room. Note the wall-to-floor curvature, an asymptotic function of material accumulation in inverse ratio to decreasing surface area of actual tatami.



Kitchen and office (but no desk space) rolled into one.

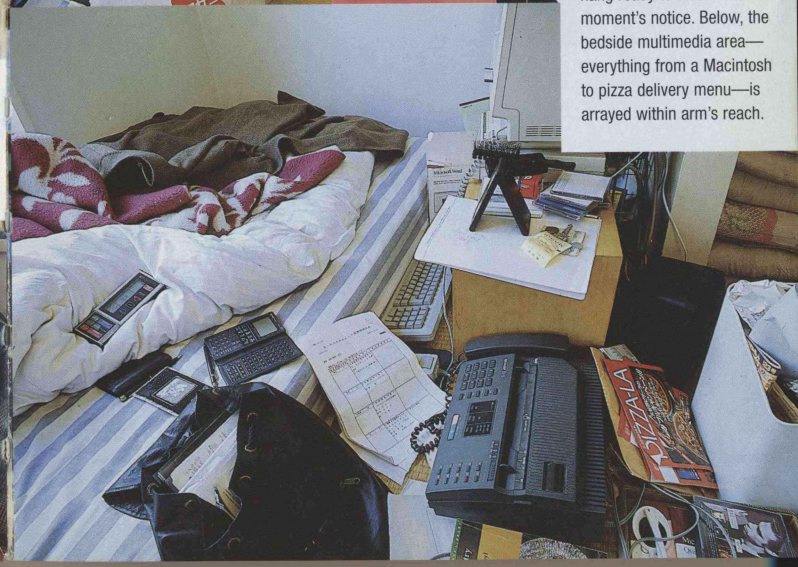


Cheap pine bookshelves await the next earthquake. Observe the struggle against order.



The upper deck of the bedding closet serves as a wardrobe. His business suits hang ready to wear at a moment's notice. Below, the bedside multimedia area—everything from a Macintosh to pizza delivery menu—is arrayed within arm's reach.







An inviting ambience, warmed by sunlight and her own special color sense.

Pre-posh Perch in Porsche-Land

In Hiroo, one of the most expensive residential areas in all of Tokyo, there remains a concentration of old wood-frame houses. While it's not so hard to find a three-tatami-mat one-room with shared toilet and no bath for ¥30,000 a month, neither is it difficult to find ultra-luxury condos for ¥1,000,000—it's the juxtaposition next door to each other that seems so strange. No bathtub or shower is no problem when there's a public bath nearby. And for the young designer who lives here, no sense working to excess to pay an excessive rent. This does just fine, thank you. She makes her own hats and fashion accessories, and sells them right from here. She practices traditional Japanese dance and has zero stress. "I've moved around lots, but never once had a place with a toilet," says she, all smiles.



Upstairs in the middle house, where towels are drying on the railing, is her room. Just out of the photograph to the right is the conveniently located public bath. You'd hardly believe this was posh Hiroo.

The make-up area sandwiched between the bed and television. There's even space below for a fax machine. She only wishes the indoor TV antenna picked up her favorite samurai drama more clearly.





She enjoys scouting second-hand shops for interesting prints to adorn her otherwise drab walls.



She always considers making before buying. The narcissus vase is a recent creation.



Rat's Nest Rococo

The workplace and domicile of a cult comic book artist—not by any means big league, but with a fanatic following. He is also a collector of Japanese and Korean pop songs, so the place is overflowing with visual reference materials and records. Unlike more major comic book artists, he does not rely on assistants, but does all drawings with his own hands. His "filing system" of reference materials can be seen in the little piles all over the apartment.

Is this the desk that launched so many manga masterpieces? No, there's no room—so he works at another table.



The top of the TV is a place of honor. At left, the shoe storage cabinet is crammed full of Korean pop music cassettes.





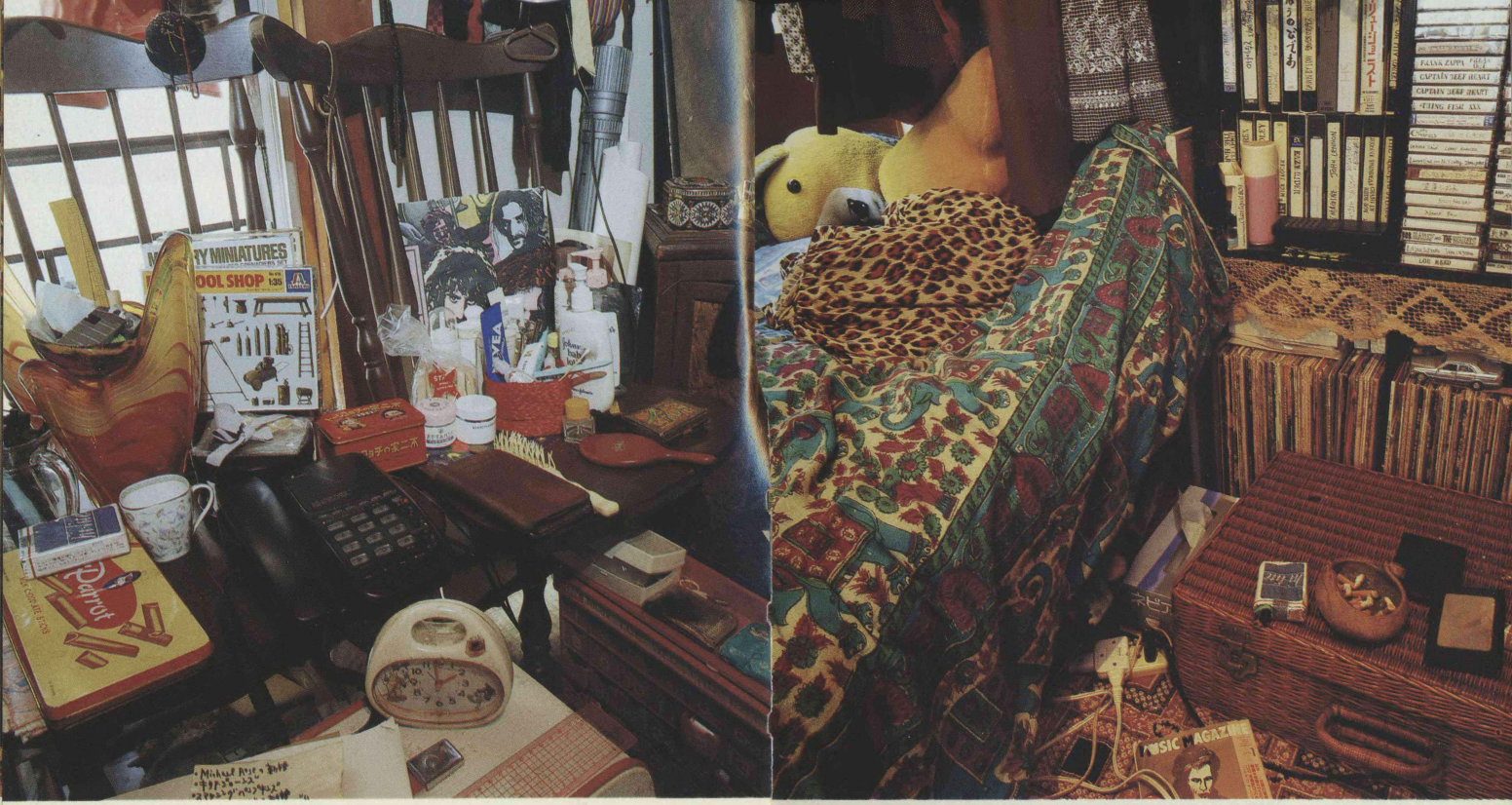
With so much clothes space above the bed, who needs a dresser?

Rock 'n Stock Chock-a-Block

A young woman, a music enthusiast who works part-time in a bar, lives alone in this three-tatami-mat one-room apartment overflowing with clothes, fashion accessories, and cassettes. The old wood-and-plaster apartment has no private bath and only a shared toilet, but she's friends with everyone on her floor. Some drop by the bar where she works every night, so there's a comfortable, communal atmosphere here. All the residents take their meals in the apartment with the largest kitchen and use the sunniest apartment for their sunroom. Very easy-going.


TWENTIES


Great Fashion Designs of the
TWENTIES
Paper Dolls in Full Color
BLUHAWK



Stuff, stuff, and more stuff. Everything from cosmetics to reading matter, the sensible urban dweller's solution.



The two-in-one clothing "lamp shade." Note the colorful ceiling insulation.

Bwana Broadcaster's Base Camp

A cameraman for TV documentaries, he's abroad over half the year in remote locations in Africa and India, where he trudges around with local crews for two or three months at a time. Needing only cheap digs where he can sleep for his Tokyo base, he rents this one-room flophouse right by a railroad track. He never locks up, and one friend or another is always apartment-sitting for him. Other residents include rock musicians, who enjoy playing full blast at all hours of the night.



And we do mean *right by* the tracks. Above, sometimes as many as three guys crash here. The mat is ready for anyone who needs a place to sleep. A small sink and hot plate are visible through the entrance to the apartment. Which means the sink is outside of the apartment. But then, he never locks his apartment anyway.

The cameraman's extensive record collection.



Housework and Its Discontents

A music reviewer lives in this apartment in an older wood-frame building. Inundated with CDs and other resource materials for work, she hates filing, cleaning, and cooking, so although the place is not really small, by Tokyo standards, it's inevitably a disaster area. In violation of her rental agreement, she keeps two cats, which have clawed her sofa bed to shreds. She gets almost no sun here, because the apartment faces an alleyway at ground level. Not that she cares—she's a night person.

The "music room" is gloomy even at midday. The table in the foreground is for writing.



Bulk storage. The pathetic *fusuma* sliding door is the cat's scratching post.



She eats out most of the time, and the kitchenette shows it.

かわいさというたからもの

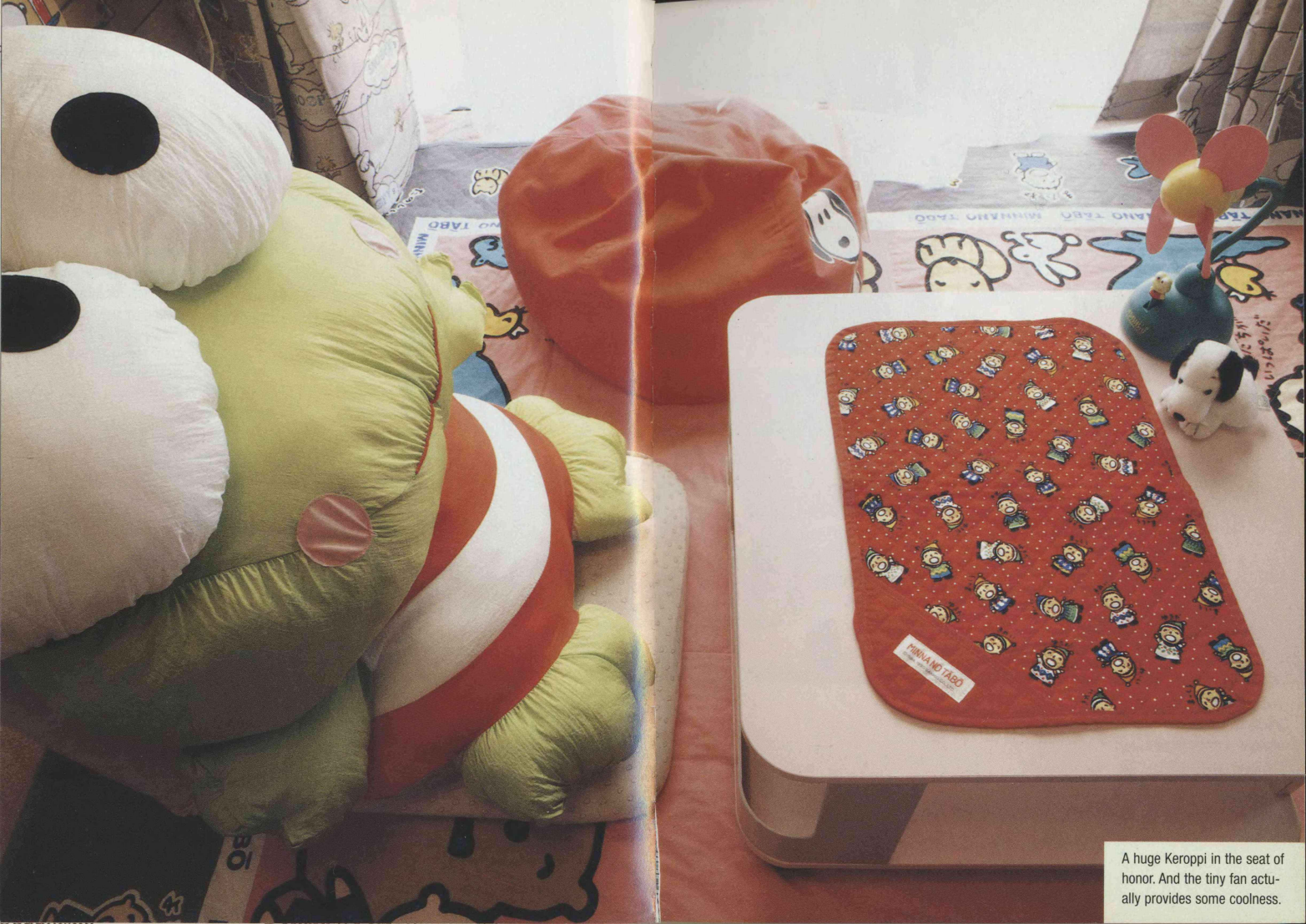
The Fancy Fetish

What is it about Japanese men? What's wrong with mature women? What's the fascination with these squeaky little debutantes? Foreign residents of Tokyo are forever wondering about the Japanese male and his prepubescent girlie. Yet for the majority of Japanese—unlike for Westerners, it would seem—childhood is not merely a passing stage, not just an imperfect preshadowing of the adult-to-be. If anything, it represents a lost paradise we would all like to hold onto if only we could. Here at least, however, it's by no means unusual to find stuffed toys and dolls in the rooms of fully grown, otherwise intelligent people, not to mention a large selection of kiddie cartoon-character products in grown-up sizes. Hardly your "elegant" Japanese mystique, the word to remember here is *kawaii*—in Japan, "cute" will get you everywhere.



Another free 'n easy Japanese "new family": the wife who loved cute cartoon-character goods so much she went to work for a company that produces them, her husband whom she met while traveling, and their baby. They live upstairs from her folks, making it a two-generation household; but except for meals, the three of them generally keep to themselves. Everything from the furnishings to the lunch box he takes to work each day are character goods—not your average brand loyalty here! It took a good number of years to lay in such an impressive array.

The interior of the apartment viewed from the entrance. Very airy, very bright.



A huge Keroppi in the seat of honor. And the tiny fan actually provides some coolness.



The *noren* door-curtain hanging in the entrance is a souvenir from motor touring.



Family snapshots among the extensive collection of characters. The vanity table came with the Tabo decal already affixed.



Maiden Territory

The apartment of an interior design student. Here she has put up lots of shelves to display her favorite comics face out, because "it's a shame to show just the spines when the covers are so pretty!" She also enjoys displaying crushed cola cans, jars filled with squashed rose petals, and other little handicraft goodies.

Her bed is by the bay window, where the elite of her collection sun themselves.



She painstakingly crushes cans and stuffs bottles with rose petals to create her own unique art objects.



The entrance area with rattan accents. Note the air freshener mounted on the column—a special touch.

Gimme Shelter x 3

A fashion model lived alone in this nice two-bedroom apartment in a pleasant residential area until two friends, both recently split from their boyfriends, moved in with her. Now there are three girls living here together, so the nice two-bedroom apartment is no longer big enough. Two of them sleep in one bed and one lays a futon down beside the bed. Windows on all sides let in plenty of sunlight, though, reducing the pressure dramatically.



A sofa for a bed, a washing machine on the veranda—apartment-living tricks in Japan.





The sole table that gets direct sunlight. Here's where everyone congregates for tea and for meals. Right, the entryway. Three women means storage problems, just for shoes alone.



The Japanese bath with those unmistakable rubber bath slippers.



Christian Lacroix and Me

The woman who lives here helps a friend in the fashion accessory business part-time, leaving the rest of her time free for making the rounds at bazaars, looking for items to spruce the place up. Most enviable. She adds her own special touch to everything she brings home: a little color here, a little remodeling there. Everything's handcrafted, top-to-bottom. "Christian Lacroix" is her appraisal of the decor.

The knit bedcover, cushions, and chair upholstery all shout color, but not without a certain "old world" charm. Almost all are Salvation Army bargains.

The desk lamp and rice cooker were picked up off the street and repainted. The patterns on the door are decals.







This ground floor apartment usually has curtains drawn. All furnishings co-exist in a curious blend of East and West.



Surrogate Stardom, But Small

A junior college coed lives in this boardinghouse-style apartment within bicycling distance of her school. She's a fan of minor theater groups and her wall is covered with posters and photos of her favorites. Totally daunted by household chores, she relies on a friendly underclassmate to come by regularly to clean up and cook for her.

The toilet paper is for the shared WC.



One apartment, one window, where on clear days cushions are put out to air. Ah, the pleasures of the wide-open suburbs! If ever the entryway becomes impassable, there's always the window.

The place is packed solid with theater group goodies. Posters, cassettes, you name it. The red dress is a uniform from her short-lived bar hostess period.



She painted the sink area yellow herself. Note its unique bracket-shelf.



The TV-top memorabilia area.

Cute-ification Project No. 22

A Tokyo University coed infatuated with images of Brooke Shields and Marilyn Monroe lives alone in this 1DK—one bedroom plus dining and kitchen. She's decorated with furnishings she brought with her from her hometown when she moved to Tokyo.



Her sleep-and-study room. The UFO Catcher on the ceiling light pull-string combines practicality with prettification. Note also the Goma-chan white seal under the TV.



The kitchen is in immaculate order. She serves up her own cooking on Peter Rabbit plates. The single-person-use dish dryer on top of the fridge also makes for convenient storage.



A typical condo-unit bath. Special bathroom slippers are needed despite the tiny floor.



Ukiyo Okay

A largish one-room apartment. The tenant is a professional buyer of Indian and Southeast Asian folk crafts whose personal tastes run to art deco and dolls. His collection of dolls is displayed here tastefully. The not-so-tasteful *ukiyo-e* design blanket was a gift from his mother when he visited home. He appreciates the peculiar mismatch effect.

A beautiful art deco cabinet with collections inside and out. Indirect lighting from the bedside lamp adds to the mood.



Near-square in floor plan, this one-room apartment seems quite spacious.



The potted cactus is really a knick-knack holder.



Double-glazed windows in the living-dining area reduce noise from outside; the small table increases the space.

Bric-A-Brac Bonsai

A busy, busy fashion journalist who is often away on business bought this sizeable two-room condo a few years back and remodeled it. She likes to cook and often has people over for dinner; rather than using a dining table, she has guests sit on the floor and serves them on traditional Japanese footed trays.

The well-stocked kitchen of the culinary enthusiast.

Her bedside, with a big word processor, a big answering machine, and stuffed toys. The position of the mirror is, well, distinctive. The array of cute stuffed toys might seem unbecoming of the career woman, but as she explains, she was given them by friends and just can't bring herself to throw them away.



The view from the bed. The entryway is recessed out of sight, making this one-room studio seem much bigger.

Much Ballet

A one-room studio, but it seems more spacious because it's a corner apartment with lots of windows. The approach from the entryway bends to create a nook for a large refrigerator and other kitchen equipment. A ballet enthusiast of long standing lives here and has decorated the room with pieces of ballet costumes. Also of note is the Buddhist altar—most unusual for a single woman.

A very sunny window, topped with figurines.



A shelf decked with various collectibles both Japanese and Western.



Inside the fridge. The freezer is above, the crisper is below.

Early Second Childhood

A department store sales clerk lives here. Lucky enough to have three days off every other week, she makes the most of single life, going on trips, skiing, and windsurfing. But most of all, she likes Snoopy; her collection of Snoopy goods goes back years. Her condominium stands immediately across from the suburban station whose train line takes her directly to work—the height of convenience. The garish pachinko game center by the station lights up the night and makes for an interesting counterpoint to her interior decor. On clear days, she can even see Mt. Fuji from here.



Her living room is practically a cartoon-character goods showroom. Everything from Snoopy and Sanrio characters abounds here.

The view from the entrance. An inordinate number of umbrellas for a single girl.

Whatever appliances you've got—TV, cassette deck, anything—put stuff on 'em. Below, Norakuro dolls "dance" to music.

The sunny bedroom. Oh so nice for those sleeping-in mornings, were it not for the alarm clock. Too many clothes for the closet? A clothes rack to the rescue!

The well-kept kitchen. The kitchen also has space for a clothes washer and dryer.

アトリエに布団を敷いて

Artsy Pads

Artists are messy, their homes disasters; it almost goes without saying, the world over. Yet you have to wonder whether this was always the case. Images of painters' and sculptors' studios that survive in period records seem incredibly tidy, the kind of well-ordered working environments where you could really get down to business, which is maybe the point: those were workshops in times when artists were production craftspersons, when your skilled artisan just didn't make a mess of the workplace. The "big spill" probably only came when what they did stopped being "work" and started looking "creative." The grindstone gave way to an adventuresome spirit of aesthetic exploration, and before you knew it, the floors became smeared with dribbled paints, the upholstery wedged with scribbled scraps of paper. See how much happier we are today?



Craft Never Sleeps

Living in the upstairs of his parents' house, converted into an independent dwelling by the addition of a separate entrance, he uses the space both as living quarters and as a workshop for his fashion accessory and fashion-shoot prop business. His life is virtually self-contained within these walls: he watches TV as he does his handiwork, cooks meals when he wants a break, and sleeps when he gets tired. Except for buying supplies at the massive do-it-yourself store Tokyu Hands and playing occasional tennis, he never goes out. Most of the furnishings—even the bed—he made himself.

The "tool shed." Working with a wide variety of materials means an equally wide array of tools.



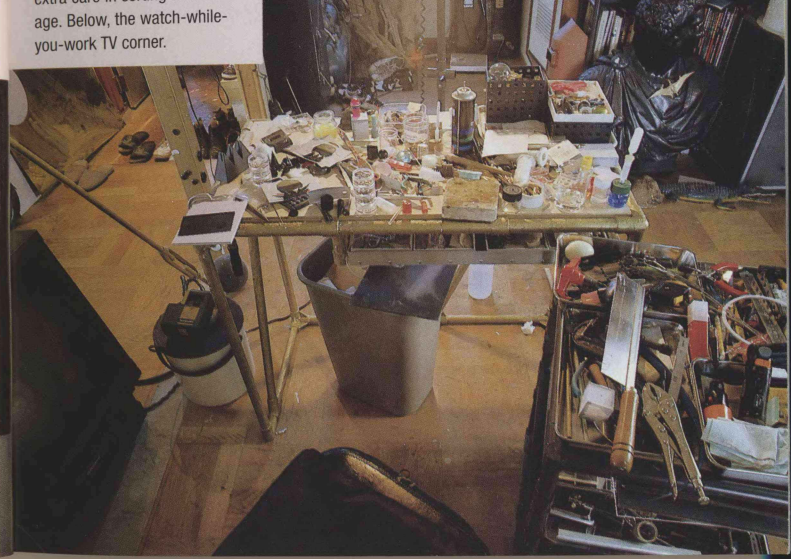
He removed a wall, creating one large room. Front, a replica of a mountain gorilla skull.





Above, a gourd-in-progress. Below, a sampling of creations displayed by a window.





Above, the small parts needed for fashion accessories require extra care in sorting and storage. Below, the watch-while-you-work TV corner.



The workshop viewed from the entrance.

Rabbit Hat Habitat

¥80,000 a month for a spacious 2DK—two rooms plus dining and kitchen—on the upper floor of a wood-frame apartment building. Quite a bargain! A working couple lives here: the husband, an industrial designer, goes off to work early in the morning, while the wife, a hat designer, likes to work at home nights. The large TV in the living area switches on automatically in the morning and stays on straight through until late. Since both often eat out, they own no dining table, and instead eat take-home meals on a low table in the living room.



Visitors are often surprised by the indoor hutch in which they keep four pet rabbits.



Left, dress shoes made by a friend as a wedding gift, proudly displayed. This page, entryway composition. Note the cornucopias atop the shoe cabinet.

The kitchen, with the entryway behind it.

The living-dining area. Perfect for one-stop view 'n chew.



A hat display finds use at home. Both hats and materials take up a lot of space.

The Little Shop of Leather

After apprenticing to a leather worker upon graduation from fashion school, this resident opted against a conventional job. He has set up sewing machines at home and makes ends meet with commissions from friends. It's hardly much of a home, though—only a three-tatami-mat room and, in that, three professional-grade machines. At night, he barely has room to roll out a sleeping bag. Thus he keeps the space highly organized. An excellent cook, he can fix a full-course Italian dinner over a tiny sink.



His work requires lots of small tools, but there never seems to be enough storage space.



Plenty of clothes. He makes a point of keeping them clean, pressed, and stowed away.



The *oshi-ire* closet utilized to the max. His sleeping bag stays below during the day.



The sundeck of the old wood-frame house next door gives him a little airspace.

Where Ends Met

An older apartment with a good-sized room and a large bathroom. Although located in the heart of the city, there are no tall buildings in the immediate vicinity, so the room gets plenty of sun. The tenant dabbles in various fields—fashion model, performance artist, painter—but doesn't earn much from any of them, so she has had to furnish the place with "finds" and hand-me-downs. The bed, for instance, consists of a mattress supported by beer cases lifted from a liquor merchant's warehouse.



The room has a southern exposure, so it gets sun for much of the day.





In the bedroom the school desk bears a heavy load. The closet, below, is glutted. The bathroom is unusually big.



The Derelict's Second Coming

The artist who lives here found the place while still in art school. Although the building is somewhat remote and in sad shape, the rent is very cheap and he has no need to go into town every day, so he's satisfied. The kitchen and studio are on the ground floor; the sleeping area, upstairs. However, the kitchen is already corroded from copper-plate-etching acids and the bedroom is in a hopeless state from paints, so the artist can only lay out his futon on the tiny board-floored landing at the top of the stairs. Behind the house is a vacant lot, so the place gets a lot of light.

Behind the left-hand wall, steep steps lead up to the sleeping area.

Originally this was the bedroom. Now the tatami mats are smeared with paint. Right, an external view. A shambles it is, but then it's not hemmed in by surrounding buildings. Note the washing machine out front.





At the head of the stairs. Now he lays his futon out on the wooden floor by the window, which can be awfully drafty.



Below and following pages, watch your step. You might think twice before lighting a kerosene heater here. The windows bring in lots of light from the adjacent vacant lot.

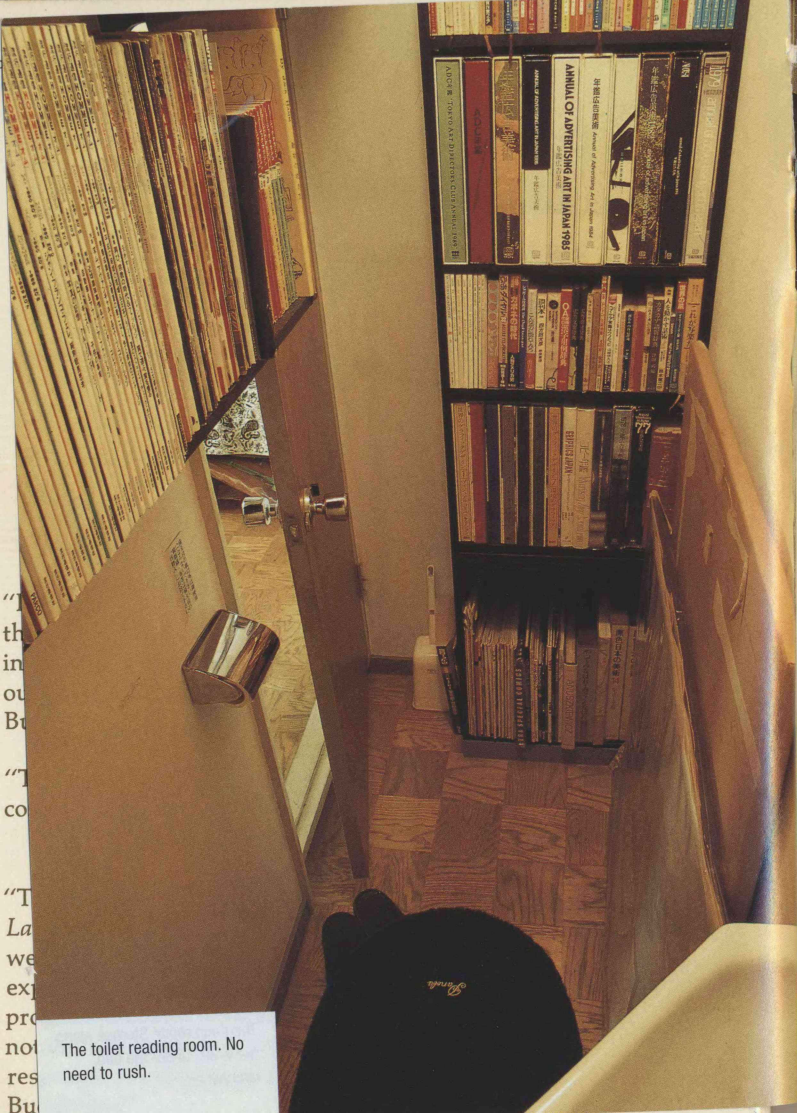




Freedom Flight, Books for Ballast

Taking leave from a busy career in order to paint, a former graphic designer rented this small one-room apartment. No bath, but the space is well located in an area near friends and favorite watering holes, so he's happy. He's put up shelves, now sagging and on the verge of collapsing, on all the walls—including the WC—to hold all his design books.

The main room. Storage along the walls, under the bed, everywhere.



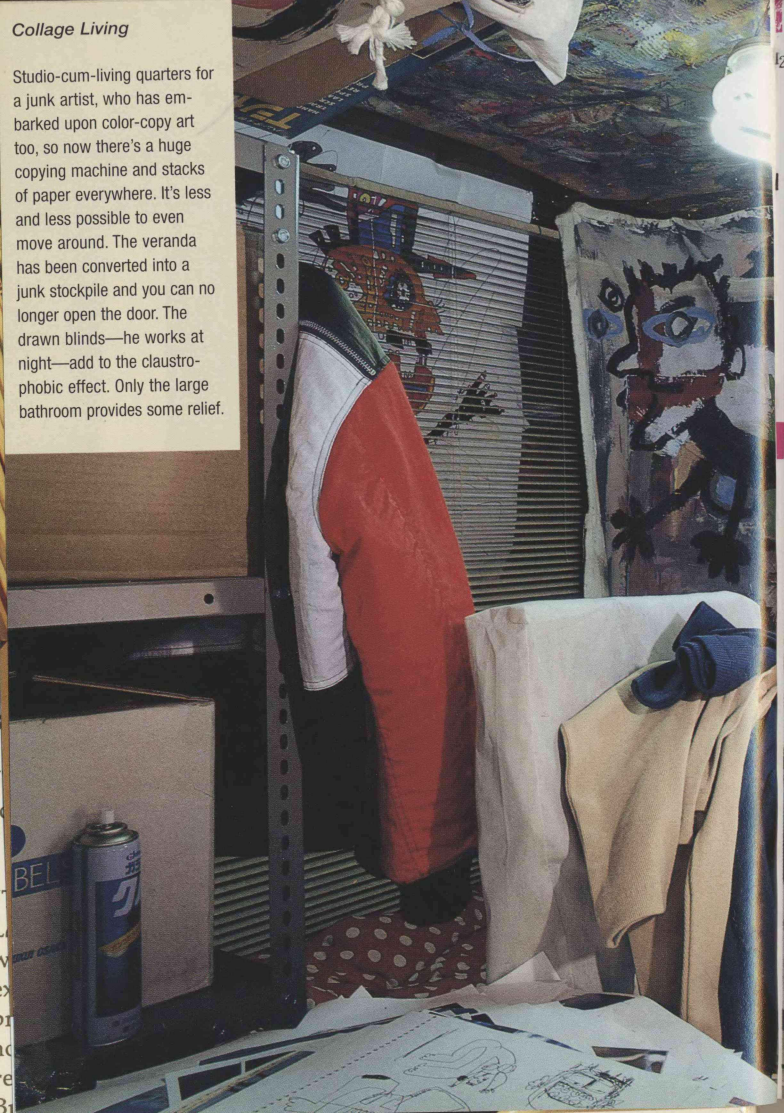
The toilet reading room. No need to rush.



Primed and underpainted papers hang to dry on the wall by the entrance.

Collage Living

Studio-cum-living quarters for a junk artist, who has embarked upon color-copy art too, so now there's a huge copying machine and stacks of paper everywhere. It's less and less possible to even move around. The veranda has been converted into a junk stockpile and you can no longer open the door. The drawn blinds—he works at night—add to the claustrophobic effect. Only the large bathroom provides some relief.





The studio in all its glory. There's a bed back there somewhere; up front, a copier.



There's good sunlight here, except that the blinds remain shut most of the time. The veranda outside is for storing junk.



The view toward the entrance. One adult can barely squeeze through. The clothes rack stays covered with a green polka-dotted sheet to protect it against work spills.



The bath, nice and warm by the window.



Darkroom for a Developing Career

This lino-floored one-room is home and darkroom for a young cameraman just recently gone independent. When working, he draws the curtains to do his developing and enlarging right here.

Fame hasn't found him yet, so he has plenty of time to make assemblages like the ones atop the television.



The big sofa was a prop from a shoot, which now serves for sitting in the day and sleeping at night. Large enough for a big guy to stretch out on, the sofa occupies a great part of the room.



The entryway, lined with shoes, is also the kitchen. The shoes await immediate departure, should opportunity knock. The bathroom and toilet are to the right.

安いのは和風

The Traditional Touch

When looking for an inexpensive place to live in Tokyo, more important than the site or even the surrounding environs is the type of structure. By a curious twist of the Japanese language, group housing of two or more storeys is called either a *manshon*—mansion—when built of reinforced concrete, or else an *apaato*—apartment—when of wood-frame construction. Naturally enough, wood-frame apartments are cheaper. Most of them feature simple, more traditional Japanese-style interiors: one or two tatami-mat rooms, *fusuma*—sliding paper doors, *oshi-ire*—bedding-storage closet—and if you're lucky, a tiny flush toilet and a small Japanese bath. If it's the frugal life you're after, these simple arrangements are really very versatile. The same tatami room can go in many directions—living, dining, bedroom—it's all in how you use it. The jambs and lintels can serve for hanging coats or supporting shelves, so there's no taking up floor space. In fact, there's almost no need for furniture at all. All the better to enjoy a retreat from this overcrowded and overdecorated metropolis!



International Non-Intentional

In an old part of Shinjuku near a new high-rise area lives a young couple—a Japanese man who works in a publishing house and his Dutch girlfriend. Their room is on the third floor of an old apartment building. On the ground floor is a pizza parlor, and on the second floor is a *yakuza* mobster ring complete with a surveillance camera above their door. He spends his weekends sitting on the tatami mats with his DJ gear or trying to use the bathroom as a darkroom.

They've left the place pretty much as they found it. Neither has much interest in decor.



Zero beautification, but the room is relaxing nonetheless.



The windowsill DJ booth.



On a Clear Day, You Can See the Construction Site

This two-room apartment with kitchen, toilet, and bath costs ¥40,000 per month. Cheap, you may think, for Tokyo. But in reality, you can find places like this without much difficulty. Who cares if it's old, wooden, and far from the nearest train station? Not the musician working part-time as a construction worker. What little furniture there is he culled off the street.

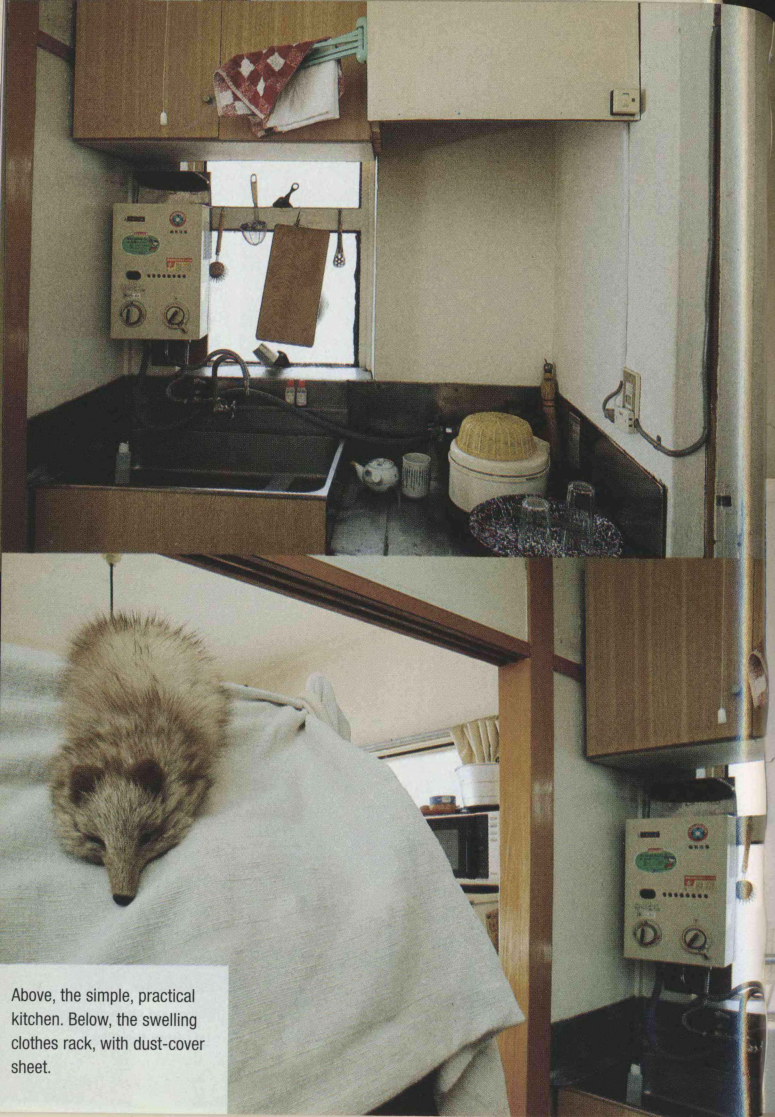
Big old Japanese-style rooms. The *fusuma* doors are damaged "just right."



Her Mother Would Know

This condo, dating back more than twenty years, has only a kitchen plus bath, yet there is a spaciousness to the place. One large window makes for a bright and open ambience, and—even rarer nowadays—the window frames are of welded steel bars, not aluminum. The old Japanese furniture might seem out of character for a fashionable young woman, but she likes going around to antique shops on her days off. Traditional at heart, on cold nights she sits on the floor at the low table and enjoys *udonsuki* noodle hot-pots.

The round stool and low table date from the '50s.



Above, the simple, practical kitchen. Below, the swelling clothes rack, with dust-cover sheet.

The paint is flaking here and there, but that's what gives the bathroom character.



Looking toward the entrance and kitchen. Farthest back is the bathroom.



The frosted glass and iron frame windows have period charm. Less than charming is the effort it takes to open and shut the windows.



A Sunny Spot to Sew

A young man working in a haute couture studio lives here. He takes jobs on the side, so he keeps a sewing machine in the bedding closet, which doubles as a work area. Here he can sit by the window on weekends and work at his leisure. Strongly disliking concrete, he looked specifically for an apartment constructed of wood, like this one. He was also taken with the view overlooking the large neighboring yard, which offers some relief from the cramped quarters.

Looking from the kitchen toward the veranda. This corner room gets lots of sunlight.



The sewing corner by the window. A clever use of the *oshi-ire* closet. Outside on the veranda is the washing machine.



He files everything away neatly. To keep magazines in order, he stands them straight up and places a board on top.



He cooks a lot, so the kitchen is well stocked, though small. The "shark" on the wall is a pot holder.

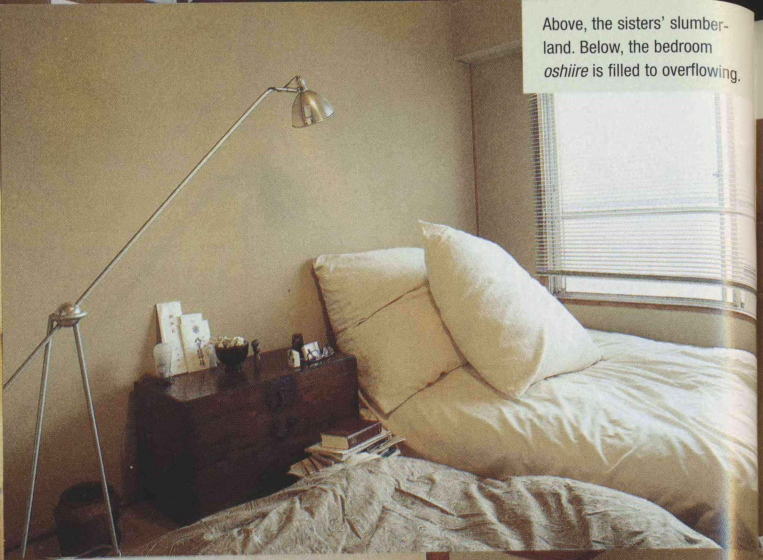
Shoes, shoes, and more shoes. Each pair is carefully fitted with shoe trees.



The Sisters' Compromise

Doing everything from planning shows at contemporary art galleries to negotiating with artists, the curator who lives here keeps incredibly busy. As communications come in from overseas at all hours, a home fax is a must. Recently, her younger sister arrived in Tokyo to share her quarters, laying out her futon beside the older sister's bed. When she needs to do her schoolwork, the younger sister sets up her Macintosh on the kitchen table. Yet even amidst all this, the older sister cooks every day to avoid eating out, so the kitchen is kept ultra-functional.

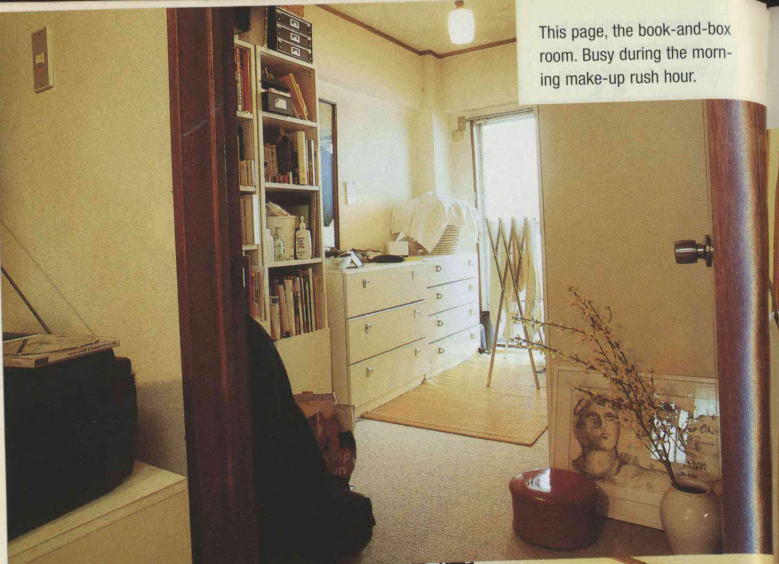
The dining table serves many purposes.



Above, the sisters' slumberland. Below, the bedroom *oshiire* is filled to overflowing.



Looking from the kitchen toward the bedroom. The futon gets stowed during the day.



This page, the book-and-box room. Busy during the morning make-up rush hour.





The "wet area." The bent wire toothbrush holder and under-sink curtain rail are inspired.



Night-Tripper's Way Station

The apartment of a writer who does articles on adult comics and TV programs. He's also into computer networking and lives practically on a reversed day-for-night time schedule. While thus unconcerned about sunlight, he does go for occasional walks in the big park next door.

As part of the job, he keeps his television permanently on.



A strange design for the entryway.



Storage is a struggle for the tons of work-related materials he keeps.


The back room is for sleeping.
No decor, just plain soothing.

Do-It-Yourself Duo's Duplex

Two women rent this space above a small ironworks. One has a job with an architectural firm; the other is currently unemployed. The layout is irregular, in keeping with the industrial site, but altogether they have three rooms totaling fifty square meters, with a huge veranda and two toilets, all for only ¥106,000 a month. The two women sleep in a bunk bed, and they also have an extra bed for guests.



The large, almost ten-tatami-mat living room. The two women easily share the 2.5-mat closet behind the couch.



The apartment didn't have a bathtub, but that was quickly remedied when they claimed a discarded plastic tub, which they set up on cinder blocks in the utility area and rigged up with hoses to their water-heater.



The ample sundeck is just right for clothes-drying and enjoying summer evening breezes.



Directly inside the door is the six-tatami-mat "study room." Below, the full-service kitchen.



The WC has been refurbished with new floor tiles and ambient lighting.



The lower level of their bunk bed.

An extra guest bed ready and waiting at the foot of their bunk bed.

モノにくるまって

Monomaniacs

Mono is the Japanese word for "things," "material objects," and "worldly possessions." Though neither singular nor plural—the distinction is not part of the language—the emphasis in Tokyo is decidedly on the latter. Thus, paradoxically, monomaniac has come to mean the obsessive collector of "more-is-more" in less and less room. You take a liking to something, it absorbs you totally, and quite naturally it fills all your available space. Your walls get covered up, the ceiling recedes from view, and gradually the squared-off angles of your interior melt into rounded, irregular cavities. Your space has not only taken on a personality, but to anyone with like tastes, it has become more inviting than the most luxury penthouse. Overflowing with treasures, these quarters seem just slightly warmer than your usual streamlined modern home. No, it's not the extra insulation of all that clutter—it's the rebounding passion of the enthusiastic occupants.



Homage to How-Much-to-the-Square

A DJ trainee lives in this three-tatami-mat one-room apartment. While he has, of course, neither a private bath nor toilet, the ¥27,000 monthly rent and walking distance to gigs in Shinjuku are certainly attractive. He uses this room to select records, record tapes, and practice music. The room has no storage space, so he makes maximum use of all floor, wall, and ceiling space to display his possessions. Living on a time schedule completely opposite of most people, he relies on a pocket beeper instead of a telephone. When paged, he rushes to a nearby public phone—or just forget it if he doesn't feel like it. Either way, it's a cheap solution.

The room is completely overwhelmed by the sheer number of decorations.



The last of the floor space. To the upper left, the door; to the right, the bed.

Below left, this address has no record, no registration, so no taxes. An urban air pocket.





The entire interior seen from outside the window. The entrance is to the right.



A Die-Hard Collector's Double Burden

A music critic's residence and workplace. Unable to live in a condominium because he has four cats, he found this low-rent old house in the suburbs. The cats can play outdoors and track dirt all over the tatami mats. As the record and CD collection increases daily, beyond all control, the floor in the workroom shows signs of slanting from the weight.



Mountains of records, CDs, and feature magazines climb higher by the month. Walk at your own risk.



The room next door. His cats come and go as they please through the window.



Even the closet is filled to the max.

Some Traditions Are Worth Fighting For

A large two-room apartment in Shinjuku is filled with expensive clothes, accessories, and magazines. The owner is a fashion stylist who has devoted more than twenty years to the field. She has moved only once during that time and never discards anything related to fashion. Her collection is now a showcase of postwar Japanese fashion history. She is also into Kabuki and Sumo. The videotapes show how she likes to spend her evenings watching her favorite Kabuki actor or Sumo wrestler, whiskey-and-water in hand.



The living room. Stuffed is the word—stuff under the sofa, stuff out on the veranda.



The dining area cupboard is also accessible to the kitchen behind.



A nook for a few more books.



Newspapers and magazines quickly pile up under the table.



Has she got cosmetics, you ask? Also note the cute towel rack.



Life is a Game

This large 2DK—two rooms plus dining and kitchen—is both home and workplace for a woman cartoonist and her male friend. Each has an individual room and shares a common living area for coinciding interests, which include computer games played on a large-format monitor. They often have friends over for gaming-and-drinking sessions. He likes to cook, so it's not a bad arrangement.

The view toward the kitchen from the game corner.



Your choice of TV games, any time of the day or night.



The futon ever-unfurled beside her desk.



The TV corner, decked out with mementos.

Surf's Up Next Door

The home of a young surfer couple. He works as a professional painter and she works part-time to help make ends meet, but surfing is their real passion. They live in a tiny "beach town" suburb of Tokyo and can actually walk to the sea with their boards, and they have a big bath—just the thing after a day at the beach. The place is a mess, but they like it that way, and so does their dog.



Windows run along the entire wall of the kitchen area, a warm and welcome feature.

The surfboard rack and beyond, the bath. Big enough for washing down wetsuits.

Above, a sunny bedroom.
Behind the blinds is storage.
Below, the pineapple is a light.

The toilet with its flower patch.



Ms. Overdrive's Driven Lifestyle

A top-selling female cartoonist, who in real life is a heavy-metal motorcycle fanatic, uses this apartment as her workroom. Here she sits at her drawing table with her frizzy candy chrome hair, and when a deadline looms nigh, several assistants also camp out with her. Cushions are stationed everywhere for quick naps. Imagine a staff of five or six cooped up here for days and nights on end.

The workroom ceiling with its line-up of UFO Catchers characters.


This space is taken up with books, tools, and what-not.
MASKING SHEET
MASKING SHEET
inverter



The comic book collection. A huge number of volumes are housed two deep in shelves.



Even the bedroom is lined with steel shelves. The desk in back is for solitary brainwork.



The well-cushioned niche beside the bed. Space for an aide to catch some shut-eye.



Claustrophobia encourages long work hours.

Homo Mechanicus

A company "salaryman" who lives for cars, plastic models, and military gear resides here. His field is design-related, so he keeps a trusty Macintosh at home for graphic design side-jobs. His place isn't particularly small; it's just that he's collected so much stuff, you can't tell how big it is. He's also rented a two-car garage space nearby, but that's already filled, too.

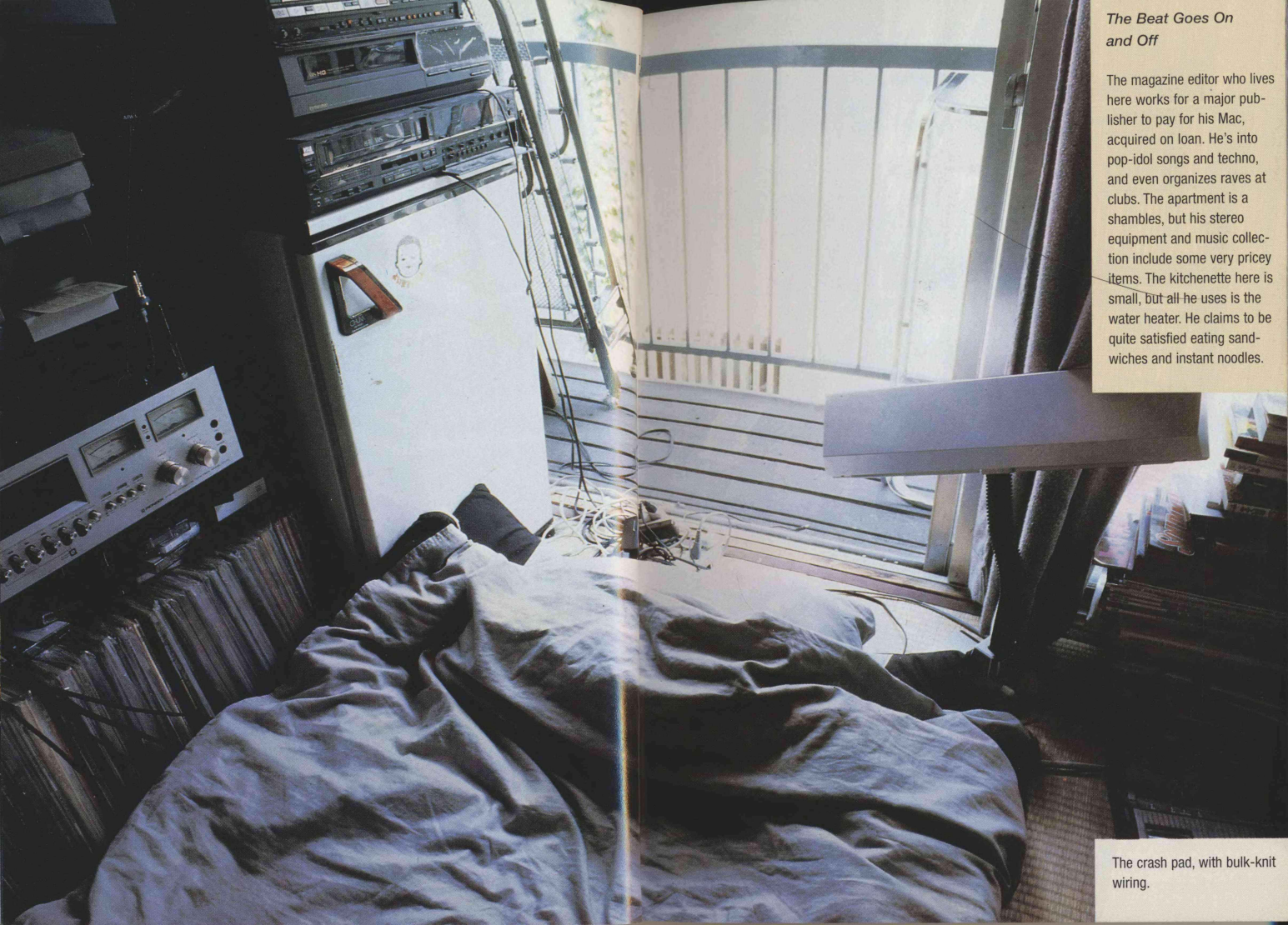


The spare-time work area merges with the living-dining room.



The kitchen is to the left of the blind. He kept the computer boxes just in case he decides to move again.

The bureau-turned-storage-unit. No writing here.



The Beat Goes On and Off

The magazine editor who lives here works for a major publisher to pay for his Mac, acquired on loan. He's into pop-idol songs and techno, and even organizes raves at clubs. The apartment is a shambles, but his stereo equipment and music collection include some very pricey items. The kitchenette here is small, but all he uses is the water heater. He claims to be quite satisfied eating sandwiches and instant noodles.

The crash pad, with bulk-knit wiring.



A Macintosh and sampling machine—costly cookies for such a cramped cubbyhole.

Literary Wallpaper

An intellectual couple—the husband teaches philosophy at university, the wife middle school art—has their apartment overflowing with books and more books. And not just journals and specialist literature; they also have an enviable collection of magazines and comics, especially girls' comics. They relax with cooking and computer games—their oversized *famicon*, or family computer, monitor overlooks a table laden with dishes.

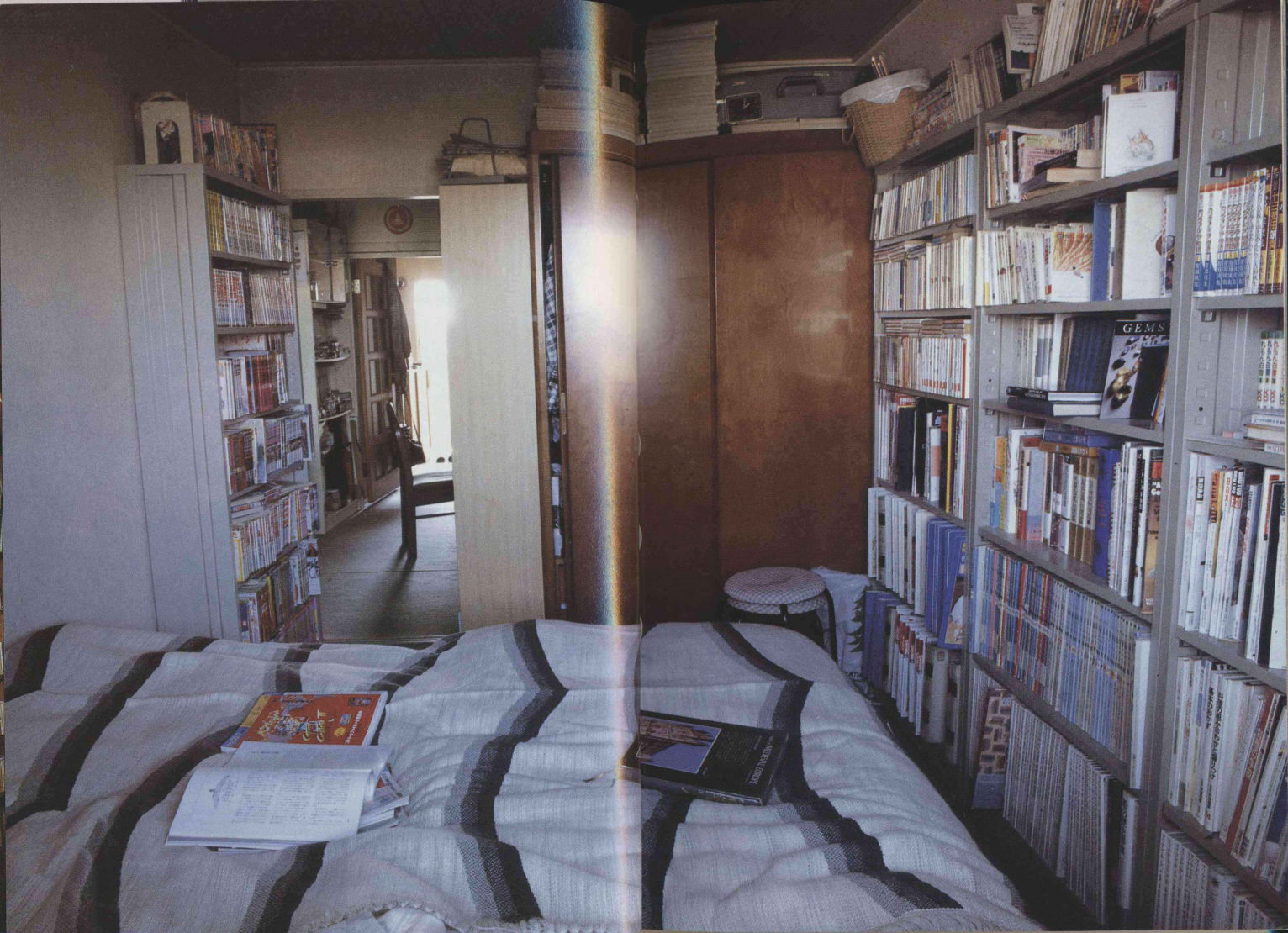


Every room, every wall, solid with books. You'd almost think they grew there. Paperbacks in front, hardcovers in back, naturally.



The dining table front line for marital war-games.

The study. The door is blocked and only opens halfway. They try not to think about earthquakes.


GEMS

子供の王国

Kiddie Kingdoms

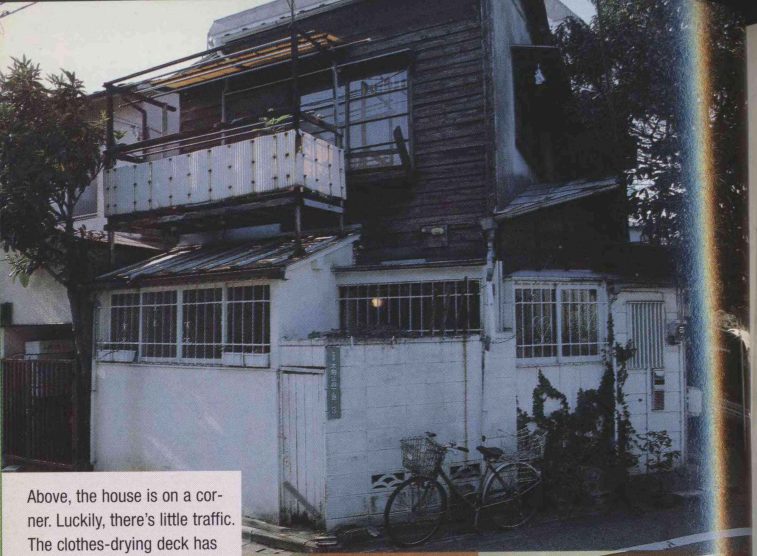
"In Europe, childhood is a way station of immaturity and imperfection to be passed through as soon as one can," a Tokyo-resident native Englander observed. "But in Japan it seems to be the happiest time of one's life." While not necessarily the entire image of Tokyo, it is truly amazing to see how often a young couple will sacrifice their fashionably cool lifestyle when they have a child and make the new arrival the centerpiece of their interior decor. The marble tabletop becomes a round-cornered sheet of decorative laminate—"Won't bump the little head, easy to wipe clean." The monochromatic color scheme suddenly blossoms with pastel tones. "A bit embarrassing eh?," the couple smiles nervously, though they themselves recognize a new warmth and comfort to the place. Unstylishly cozy—that's the feeling that comes across.



To the Manor Recycled

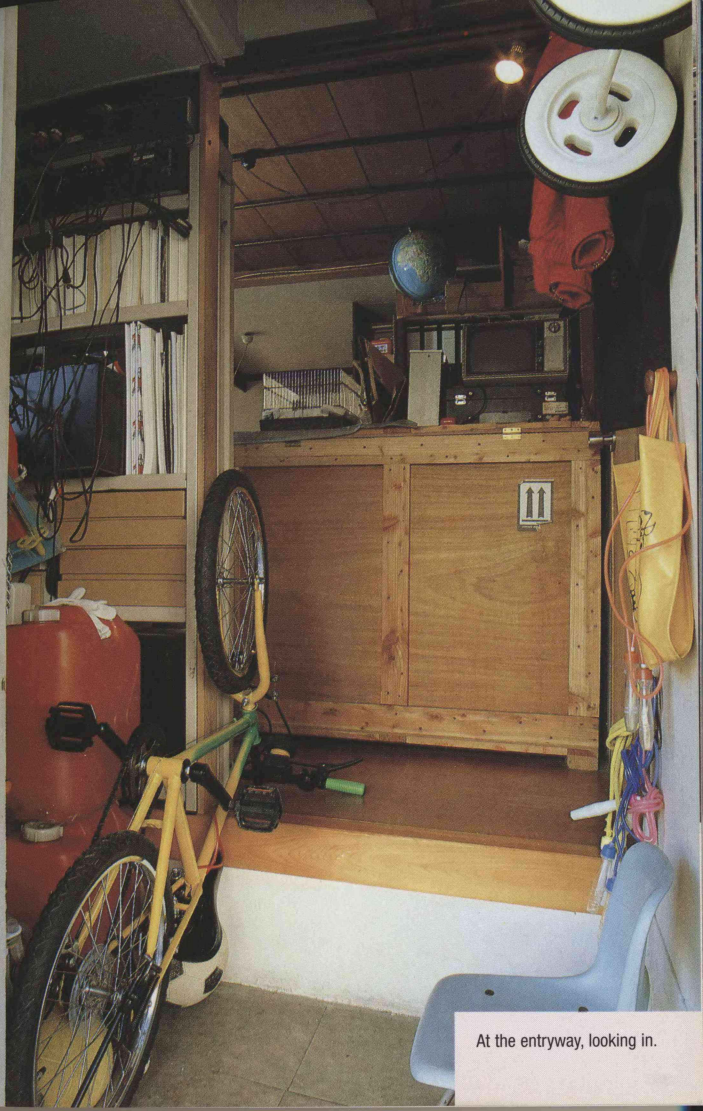
A family of three, husband and wife and their grade-school-age daughter, found this run-down house in one corner of Tokyo's *shitamachi*, or old quarter, which still retains something of its pre-war atmosphere. The husband works as coordinator for architectural projects as well as editor of an architectural magazine. Rather than get caught in the morning rush-hour jam, he sets out at five or six in his Austin Mini Cooper and reaches the office in less than fifteen minutes. He puts his knowledge of building into home improvements, but even so, there are limits: old Japanese wood-and-plaster houses are drafty in winter and no amount of fixing up can remedy that.

The daughter's study corner.



Above, the house is on a corner. Luckily, there's little traffic. The clothes-drying deck has seen years of use. Below, the kitchen.





At the entryway, looking in.



Upstairs is the bedroom.





The living-dining area. The furniture selection reflects a professional eye.

Ordinary Is Best

A graphic designer, his wife, and two daughters live in this traditional-style house in the suburbs. It's a two-hour commute to his office—not unusual for the Tokyo suburbanite. He inherited the house and garden from his father twenty years ago and has been living here since, with no major changes in the interior. He gets home very late from work, so the house basically belongs to his wife and daughters. After the tension of his hard-edge design world, however, he feels much more comfortable in this warm, homey clutter.



The daughters have the biggest room in the house. They live a short walk from their primary school, so classmates come over to play often.



Above, little items well-organized in little containers. Left, the cherished wood-and-mortar family house. A typical scene in a typical residential area anywhere in Japan.

The entrance to the girls' room.


Mickey
マイメロン



The *kotatsu* heater-table (a heater under the table keeps dangling legs warm) where the family gathers.



Survival of the Neatest

An audio manufacturer technician lives here with his wife and child. A cramped corner 1DK—one room plus dining and kitchen—with an oblique floor plan, made somewhat less constrictive by its location in a relatively green area. The living-playroom-bedroom is by necessity always kept very well organized. With little storage space, the futon bedding is carefully folded every morning, set in a corner, and covered with a spread, while clothes are kept in storage cases. And since there is no bicycle-rack area for the building, the husband's and child's bikes have to be stored inside.

The living room is a bedroom at night. The futon bedding is hidden under a blanket.

The living room, where the family's clothes are neatly stored. Organizational skills make up for lack of storage space.

The kitchen. A masterpiece of efficient order of utensils and supplies.

Domus Teenus

The typical unit in an outlying "new town" mass housing complex. Here lives a salary-man husband, his wife—an art-flower hobbyist—and two teenage daughters. The girls share a room, with side-by-side desks and futons also laid out side by side at night. The decor is almost solely by the wife.

The girls' room. The futons go down at night. Note the slippers tucked under the chairs.





Let's give the desks a once-over. The faux cattail lying in the middle is for a new member of the family, a cat.



The living room. Regard le grand piano. The sofa belongs to the cat.

住まいの必要十分条件

Inertial Living

There are those who by their very nature have no interest in interior design. To these folks, the notion of a "new look" never even enters their heads. They move into a new place and give not a thought to changing the wallpaper or adding more storage space. Whatever's in the room, built-in or attached, that's how it stays. And if something is wanting, they'll make a quick purchase or haul in something off the street. Their living space is as functional as need be—no more, no less. This species of human has "better things to do" than spend time matching wall coverings and curtains and furniture.



Glad I Don't Like to Cook

A music writer with an aversion to housekeeping occupies this sizeable one-room-plus kitchen apartment. Living on a nocturnal schedule, she never seems to meet the garbage collection times, so the kitchen piles up with black plastic trash bags. But as she almost never does her own cooking and only buys to-go food for that day, none of the garbage is perishable or particularly smelly.

The walk-in kitchen with its mound of garbage bags. Meals at home are never a big deal.



The garbage bags and, well, the newspapers under the table . . . But the arrangement allows for making tea without moving about the kitchen.



The bedroom. She sometimes plays in a band with friends for the fun of it.

Play It As It Lays

After high school, this young musician-wannabe came to Tokyo. Packing his belongings on his motorcycle, he rode all the way up from Nagasaki, more than a week's trek. Looking for a little bit of nature, as in his hometown, he found an apartment near the Tama River Boat Racing Center. Although he has formed a band with other transplanted Nagasaki boys, they have yet to earn any income from it, so he works on construction crews. The only furnishing in the apartment, a noisy refrigerator, was found on a building site.



The view toward the kitchen and entryway looks like this. No furniture to block the view.



Left, fields all around here still. Above, the bedroom. All you need to do is keep your clothes folded to see what's what.

Plenty of light. A silver groundcloth makes a warm place to stretch out.



Left, a cast-off shop refrigerator. This page, the kitchen. Simple in the extreme.



Proper Disuse

Careful with the upkeep of this relatively older apartment, built over ten years ago, the occupant works for a fashion show production company. The irregular work hours mean he usually eats out for all three meals, so the kitchen stays spotless. Immediately noticeable is the advertising signboard which he nicked in the dead of night. The tricycle by the bed was a gift from a friend and serves as a side table. Drinks can be placed on the step and convenience store plastic bags slung over the handlebars act as a trash receptacle, plus it moves where needed.

The rattan "carpet" gives a cool and clean appearance.

The tricycle side table by the bed. Below, the corner with a butterfly chair and a small table.

Shirts, ties, and other office wear, all in proper order.



The view toward the entrance. The WC is through the door on the right.

Weekend at the Company Dorm

A cosmetic manufacturer's dormitory for single men. The building is brand new and hardly seems like a single men's dorm. All units are single rooms with modular unit baths. Various and sundry items here all say cosmetics firm employee, for example the make-up mirror—not to be found in any other men's apartments in this book. And although technically forbidden, most weekends this tenant has his girlfriend over.



The view toward the entryway.



Above, the vanity corner. A decent "do" takes time. Left, contemporary apartment style, situated in a central area.

The neat and tidy bed with all-purpose toilet paper.



Left, the audiovisual station across from the bed. This page, shoes welcome you at the door.



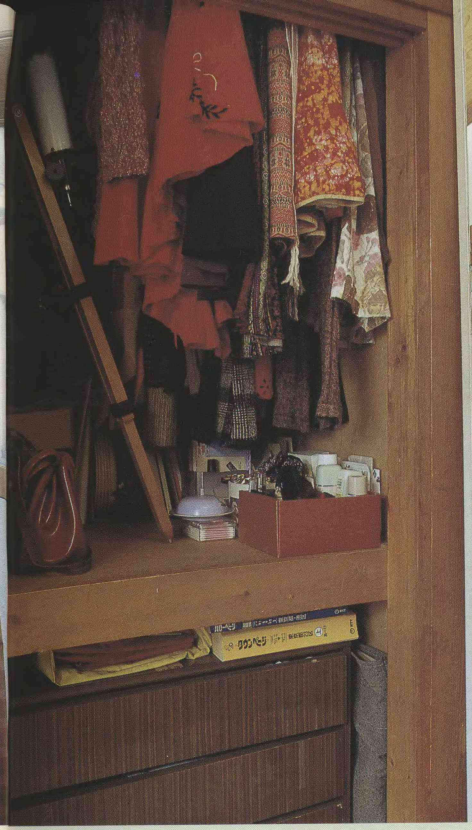
Easy Living Made Easier

Just returned from London, the young woman who lives here manages a free-and-easy life by working only three days a week. Everything here—furnishings, utensils, clothes—she picked up at bazaars. With only one room and a sink area, she can't bring work home, which is fine with her.

The view from the kitchen.



The keyboard set on her writing desk is for practicing children's songs.

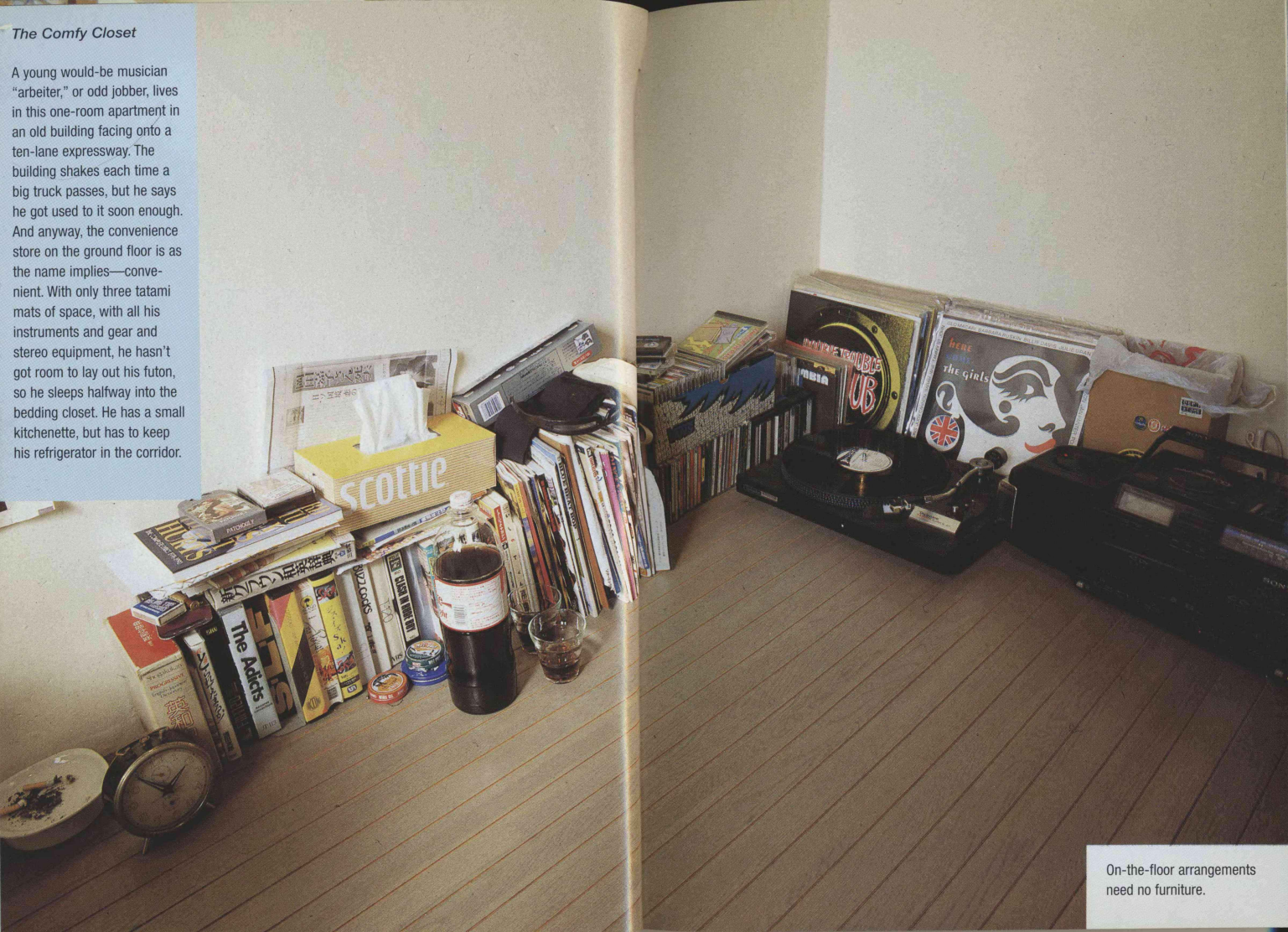




A closet full of no-care secondhand clothes.

The Comfy Closet

A young would-be musician "arbeiter," or odd jobber, lives in this one-room apartment in an old building facing onto a ten-lane expressway. The building shakes each time a big truck passes, but he says he got used to it soon enough. And anyway, the convenience store on the ground floor is as the name implies—convenient. With only three tatami mats of space, with all his instruments and gear and stereo equipment, he hasn't got room to lay out his futon, so he sleeps halfway into the bedding closet. He has a small kitchenette, but has to keep his refrigerator in the corridor.



On-the-floor arrangements need no furniture.



The upper compartment of the *oshi-ire* closet is for storage while the lower compartment is headspace for when he sleeps. A little shelf unit serves as a nightstand.



In the Valley of the Office Buildings

A wood-and-plaster leftover, sandwiched between skyscrapers in the heart of the city. No bath, shared toilet, and poor sunlight all make for cheap rent. The tenant, however, is usually away in India and elsewhere with the Japan Overseas Youth Corps and only needs a crash pad back here.

A small but efficient kitchenette. The clothesline is a permanent feature, useful for hanging laundry and wardrobe.



The bed and desk face onto the window.



Don't Remodel, Add On

This unit, in a large apartment complex that faces onto a main thoroughfare, is in an older building replete with detailing that is rarely seen anymore in Tokyo. Here lives the manager of a top photographer. Living alone, in her free time she prefers to hunt out oddments that she can work into her own original decorator scheme rather than purchase large ready-made furnishings. Thus, she's made her own home "workbench" in the bathroom and in lieu of it goes to the neighborhood bathhouse, which has a sauna. If the weather is good, she bicycles to the office.

The living room, with *shoji* doors and lino flooring that are curiously harmonious.

Above, brick-and-board bookshelves. Below, objects culled from yearly trips to New York.

Plenty of storage space, if you don't bathe here.



An old-fashioned Japanese apartment kitchen.



Keep Renting—It's Cheaper

This is the apartment of a single salesgirl in a chic boutique who has lived here since her college days, so the rent is very affordable—¥60,000 with private bath and toilet. The area is also a student neighborhood, so cheap eats and drink abound nearby. Although conversely, her main problem is that she likes to cook, but doesn't often have time.

The bed area seen from the kitchen. A somehow feminine appeal.



The before-she-knew-it shoe collection.



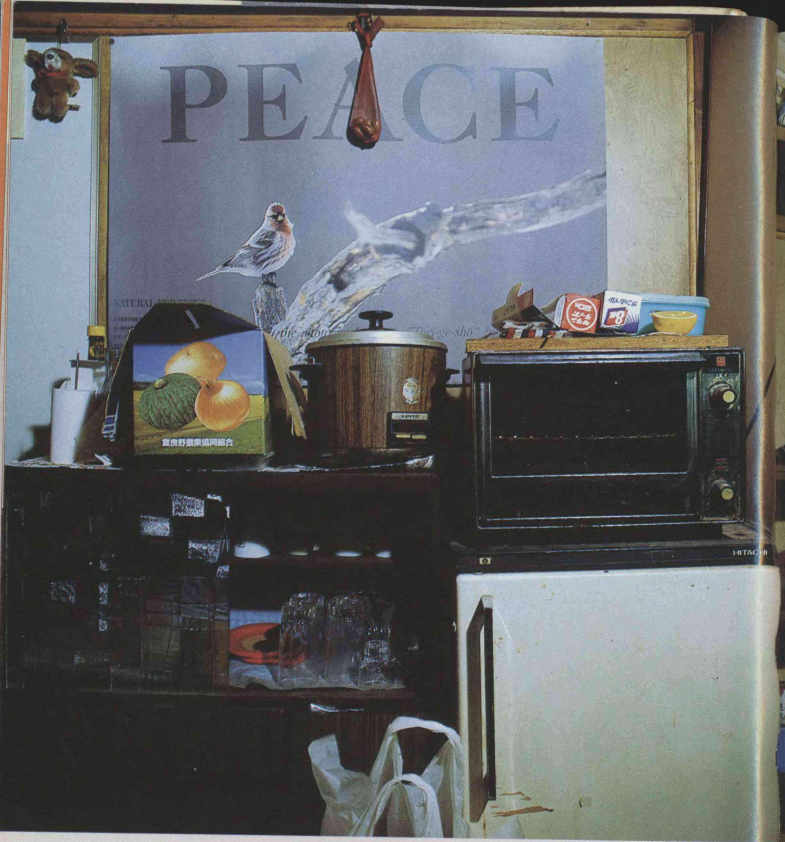
The entrance, sink area, and *oshi-ire* closet remodeled into a storage center. His love of order strikes you immediately.



Track Writing

This old apartment vibrates slightly all day because it stands next to a railroad track. Also because of that, the floor is a little off. The building is traditional, where you take off your shoes at the main entrance, then proceed by stairs or corridors to each unit. No bath, but there are one or two toilets on each floor. This resident likes ancient Greek literature and holds reading parties in his room. A table serves many purposes for him—as a desk, an eating table, and a "bed."

An intelligent microcosm centered around a low *kotatsu* heater-table.





Above, utilities for survival all in a row. Right, one corner naturally gravitated into becoming a closet.

Canvasation Piece

A former art school student has been living in this old wooden apartment house for more than eight years, since college. Though his room measures only four-and-a-half tatami and has no bath, next door is a nice garden, just out his window, which opens up the tiny room. Here he draws and paints, and eats and sleeps in between canvases. He enjoys listening to classical music during the day, when others are out working.



A corner room with plenty of light. The huge speakers never get turned up to full amp.



Just inside the front door.



The classical music collection and his painting-supply stand. Unseemingly high-tech rabbit-ear antennas atop the TV.

Afternoon reading in a sunny spot.

The sink. In front, his "splash-time set" waits ready for a jaunt to the public bath.



The interior at a glance. Not much sunlight. Almost all appliances and furnishings are hand-me-downs or temporary loans from friends.

Forty Winks for the Road

A serious backpacker uses this small apartment as his base camp. He works on construction sites and when he gets enough money to buy a plane ticket, he leaves. He just came back from a half-year trip to Tibet and is already getting ready to leave for Okinawa next week for a three-month work-holiday in a sugarcane field. The rent here is a very cheap ¥27,000 per month. So what if he has to put up with hearing the telephone of the two adjacent rooms and keeping his coat on in the room on winter nights? Hardly roughing it, as far as he's concerned.

The catch-all corner for spillover from the closet.



Sous les toits de Tokio

A longtime resident of Japan, the American man who lives here translates contemporary Japanese literature. This one-room studio in the heart of Tokyo's fashion district is part of a building designed in the early '60s by a young Japanese architect upon his return from Scandinavia. Modernist in feeling, the odd trapezoidal floor plan adds to the charm. Only recently moved in, our American friend has embarked on a full redecoration of the place, starting with the walls, where sand mixed into the paint adds texture.

The view from the desk toward the entrance.



A heavy plank on stainless steel shelves makes a desk. So why not put a seat-top on a storage cart for a chair?



With a little effort—and a lot of time—even the most perplexing layouts can be refurbished.



Kitchen details.

Cosmetic Cell

A cosmetic manufacturer's dormitory for its single male employees. The building itself is old, and some longtimers have lived here for almost twenty years. Each room is private, albeit miniscule, and each has the same bed, wardrobe, and curtains. As all employees are expected to look sharp, dormers lay in an array of good clothes and the company's cosmetics; but spared other prying eyes (visitors are not allowed), every room is incredibly messy. Lavatories and bathrooms are shared, as are all meals, in the classic dormitory tradition.



The un-beautified state of the room.



The dresser proves too small for all the clothes. A garment rack, foreground, helps.



The communal lavatory. The wooden clogs really echo on the tiled floor.



Inside a dorm room. Apart from a dresser outside the frame, this is the whole unit.





Above, the bedside manner of the fastidious company man. Below, the table doubles as a nightstand.





In Praise of Claustrophobia

The computer programmer who lives here gets by on freelance work and spends most of his time at home in his apartment. A longtime music buff, he prides himself on his collection of musical instruments and records, and now laserdiscs. Not much for stepping out, he typically cooks his own meals. He enjoys his time alone, reading at the kitchen table over a drink at his leisure.

He exercises while watching TV. Not a moment wasted.



Collections of collections, and not a thought for when the time comes to move.

The kitchen, with a large bottle of sake on the table.

Interior space. For once, some real space.



The sunlight could be better, but at least there's no worry of waking up too early.

Determination's Dressing Room

Virtually the archetypal single male's lodgings: a three-tatami-mat room with a small sink area and a futon. This is home to an unfettered young man who spends his days on archeological digs and his nights at dives. Always dressed like a road worker, he has few possessions besides books and cassettes.



The tiny sink doubles as a tiny washbasin. The tapes were dubbed from rented CDs. Compact without the discs.



The bedtime reading area.



Parties Without Appointment

Backstage for a young woman member of a small theater group. With a slightly oversized kitchen for her four-and-a-half-tatami-mat room, she has friends over to eat and drink every night. Otherwise she gets by with a *kotatsu* heater-table, an old wardrobe, an electric rice-cooker, and so on—all found on the street.

Windows on two sides of a corner make for an expansive feeling. A diagonal clothesline doubles duty and drama.



The kitchen. Almost too big for a four-and-a-half-tatami-mat room.



An old-fashioned cabinet culled from the street.

Boarding House Gothic

Amongst the cheap student lodgings in the Hongo district around Tokyo University stand not a few houses that managed to escape firebombing during the war. Of these, one of the most famous is this apartment building, an imposing monument of some seventy units where you'll find all types—students, perennial student-types, old folks, etc. Why, not long ago, there were even whole families living here. Current occupancy is about fifty people, but to think that during the post-war housing crunch there were some three hundred and fifty living here gives one an idea of the scale of the place. The construction is "won't be standing much longer" old, but all communal toilets, cooking facilities, and other shared areas are kept impeccably clean. And with the low ¥20,000-range rent, many have stayed on here since their college days. Three-storey wood-frame structures such as this do not conform to present fire laws, but special care is taken with fire-prevention: each evening the superintendent walks the halls calling out, "Hi no yojin!" ("Fire alert!"), as they did in Tokyo long ago.

This huge three-storey building towers above the streets of Hongo. The detailing around the entrance and sheer mass of the timbers speak of past grandeur.



An architect's pad. He's lived here since his school days, now commuting to work.



Not a single piece of upright furniture. Floor-level living makes tatami-matted rooms seem more spacious. The architect has a garden view. The neighboring buildings through the trees are just as old and enchanting. Lovely glass panes are set in the *shoji* paper sliding windows.



A friend's canvas dominates the small alcove.



Another architect's apartment. In contrast to the previous pages, here the floor, walls, and ceiling are packed with possessions. Poles across the ceiling make for storage above and hanger space below.



TV reception is terrible. For bedtime viewing, the "magic wand" poker eliminates the need for a remote control.



Near the door. The circle is a fold-up low table. Very convenient.

Near the door. The circle is a



The "toilet paper tower" is a take-your-own boarding-house tradition.





The courtyard seen from the top floor. You'd hardly believe you were in Tokyo.



For this tenant, there's only a frosted glass partition between her and the corridor, so the clothes also block stray eyes.



She has one of the few rooms in the building with a real sink area, so she doesn't have to traipse down to the communal kitchen each time she wants a cup of tea. The water purifier is a gift from a friend, celebrating her new "single life."



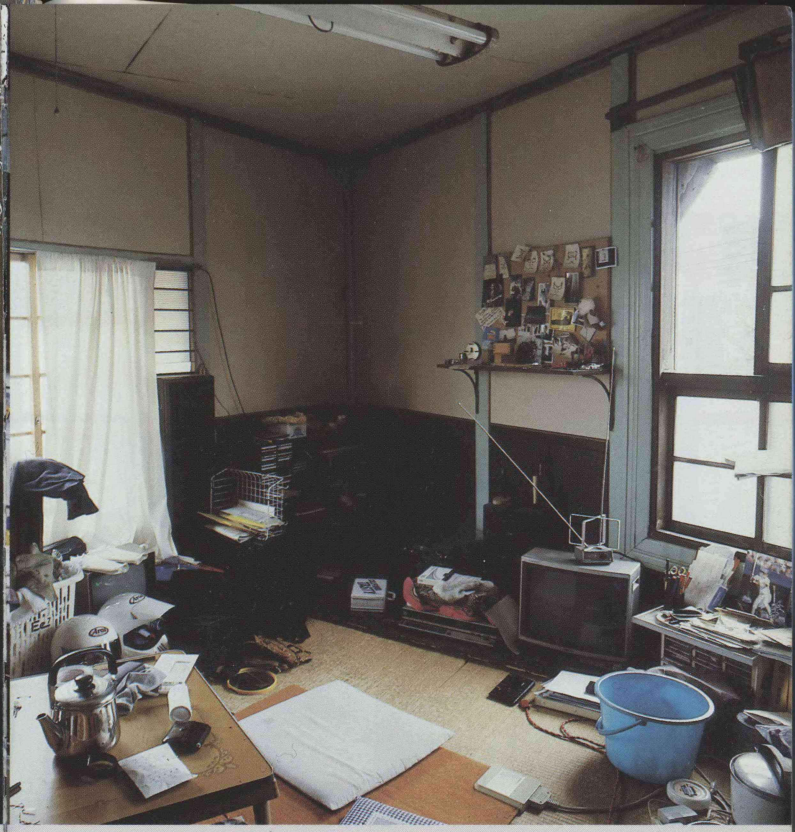
A room on the ground floor, directly on the street. Plenty of sunlight, though.



This largest room is eight-tatami-mats in size. Situated on the top floor, the natural light can't be beat. It's so bright, in fact, the resident sleeps in the storage alcove.



The sleeping alcove. Dark and cozy.





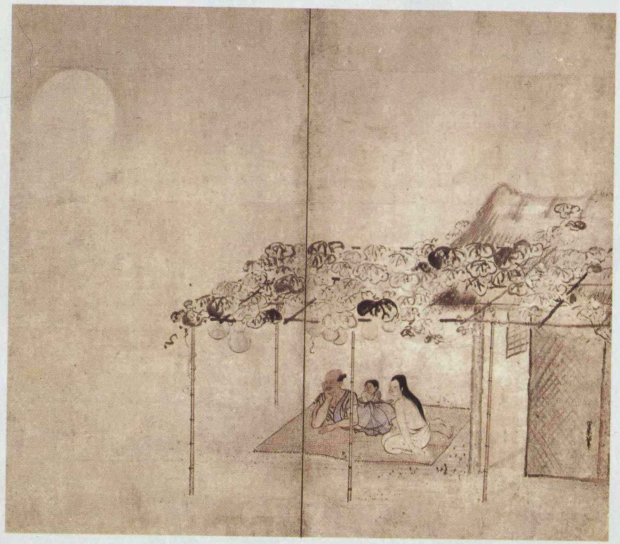
The student who lives here has a taste for antiques. He found the writing table and other furnishings at second-hand stores. Note also the ceramic pig for burning mosquito-repellent coils.


Band
Musical Band


TRUMPETS
TROMBONES



The scenic view of Hongo from this window could hardly seem less like Tokyo at the end of the 20th century.



Moonflower Trellis in the Evening Cool, by Morikage Kusumi. © Tokyo National Museum

More than once I've gone to the Tokyo National Museum in Ueno Park to view a folding screen entitled *Moonflower Trellis in the Evening Cool*. Painted by Morikage Kusumi, a minor artist whose career was little documented and whose authenticated works are few, this panel is thought to date from the early Edo Period (1600–1868), though little else about it is known. For me, the scene depicted is an image of the ideal life. Even now, after all the homes I've visited for work or pleasure, whenever asked what I consider the ultimate in living arrangements, I fondly recall this picture. For even today, amidst Japan's unprecedented devotion to money, even after property and fame and desires have all been attained, somewhere in the backs of our minds lingers an altogether Asian vision of the quiet life in a thatched hut deep in the mountains. So long as people still travel all the way up to country villages to stay in tiny inns, so long as we still enjoy simple fare from food-vendor pushcarts, so long as we find comfort in little things, I feel optimistic that these islands won't lose their "Japanese-ness."

We've all seen what the media have had to say about "Japanese living." Those images are ready-made and bear little resemblance to how we really live. A brand-name "Japan Style." Well, this is not a book about technology or postmodernism or wabi and sabi or any other label.

The attempt here is merely to introduce those outside Japan to what ordinary Tokyo homes are like. Among all the techno-teahouse-bonsai blitz, I just wanted to throw in my two bits about how people who can't shell out hundreds of thousands of yen a month for rent can still live in Tokyo and, I must say, live rather nicely.

When I informed friends that I intended to make a photo book on "low end" Tokyo homes, they unanimously thought it was a cruel and unusual thing to do. Downright perverse, even. Okay, so likely none of these nooks would ever grace an interior decor spread. Not for some minimalist aesthetic and certainly not for the typical Japan-style chic, either. I have no idea how Westerners will look at these photographs, but if the angle seems in any way sarcastic, the aim tinged with venom, then my efforts of the last two years will have been for nothing.

There's a Buddhist adage that says: Half a mat to sit, one mat to lie down. No matter how huge a mansion you may build, there's no need for more than one-meter by two-meters when you sleep; no matter how many dishes are set out before you, there's no eating what will feed ten. Sure, given the choice, who wouldn't like more space instead of less? Still, if it comes down to working extra hard just to pay high rents and mortgages, then there are people who would rather spend that time surrounded by

their favorite things. They're the ones who never appear in magazines or on television. There they are. If you get some inkling that plenty of Tokyo-ites are doing just fine in ordinary living circumstances, if this book gives some clue that the mystery that is Tokyo might really be just a regular kind of town after all, then I will have succeeded.

I don't much care for long-winded acknowledgments. So let me just say that a lot of people helped me realize this book. There were nearly a hundred, of course, who opened their private apartments at my immoderate requests. In addition, there were pro-cameramen Hirai and Nakano and Ueda, who taught this total amateur the basics. Mr. Omae of Kyoto Shoin, who stuck his neck out on this risky publishing project. Nishioka, the designer. Birnbaum, the translator. And of course, Ms. Abe, who assisted me from beginning to end. Thanks everybody—it looks like we got ourselves a book.

—Kyoichi Tsuzuki






安全寺

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